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THE

WORKS

OF

C. CHURCHILL.

VOL. IV.

THE

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OF

C. CHURCHILL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

CONTAINING

SERMONS

ON THE

LORD's PRAYER.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

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M DCC LXXIV.

H

THE

DEDICATION.

HEALTH to great GLOSTER—from a man unknown,
Who holds thy health as dearly as his own,
Accept this greeting—nor let modeſt fear
Call up one maiden bluſh—I mean not here
To wound with flatt'ry—'tis a villain's art,
And ſuits not with the frankneſs of my heart.
Truth beſt becomes an *Orthodox* Divine,
And, ſpite of hell, that character is mine;
To ſpeak e'en bitter truths I cannot fear;
But truth, *my Lord*, is panegyric here.

Health to great GLOSTER—nor, thro' love of eaſe,
Which all Prieſts love, let this addreſs diſpleaſe.
I aſk no favour, not one note I crave,
And, when this buſy brain reſts in the grave,
(For till that time it never can have reſt)
I will not trouble you with one bequeſt.
Some humbler friend, my mortal journey done,
More near in blood, a nephew or a ſon,
In that dread hour executor I'll leave;
For I, alas! have many to receive,
To give but little—To great GLOSTER *health*;
Nor let thy true and proper love of wealth
Here take a falſe alarm—in purſe though poor,
In ſpirit I'm right proud, nor can endure
The mention of a bribe—thy pocket's free,
I, though a Dedicator, ſcorn a fee.
Let thy own offspring all thy fortunes ſhare;
I would not ALLEN rob, nor ALLEN's heir.

Think not, a thought unworthy thy great ſoul,
Which pomps of this world never could controul,
Which never offer'd up at pow'r's vain ſhrine,
Think not that pomp and pow'r can work on mine.
'Tis not thy name, though that indeed is great,
'Tis not the tinſel trumpery of ſtate,

'Tis

'Tis not thy title, Doctor tho' thou art,
'Tis not thy mitre, which hath won my heart.
State is a farce, names are but empty things,
Degrees are bought, and, by miſtaken kings,
Titles are oft miſplac'd; mitres, which ſhine
So bright in other eyes, are dull in mine,
Unleſs ſet off by Virtue; who deceives
Under the ſacred ſanction of *Lawn Sleeves*,
Enhances guilt, commits a double ſin;
So fair without, and yet ſo foul within.
'Tis not thy outward form, thy eaſy mein,
Thy ſweet complacency, thy brow ſerene,
Thy open front, thy love-commanding eye,
Where fifty Cupids, as in ambuſh, lie,
Which can from ſixty to ſixteen impart
The force of love, and point his blunted dart;
'Tis not thy face, tho' that by Nature's made
An index to thy ſoul, tho' there diſplay'd
We ſee thy mind at large, and thro' thy ſkin
Peeps out that courteſy which dwells within;
'Tis not thy birth, for that is low as mine,
Around our heads no lineal glories ſhine—
But what is birth—when, to delight mankind,
Heralds can make thoſe arms they cannot find;
When thou art to thyſelf, thy Sire unknown,
A whole, Welch genealogy *alone*?

No, 'tis thy inward man, thy proper worth,
Thy right juſt eſtimation here on earth,
Thy life and doctrine uniformly join'd,
And flowing from that wholeſome ſource thy mind,
Thy known contempt of perſecution's rod,
Thy charity for man, thy love of God,
Thy faith in Chriſt, ſo well approv'd 'mongſt men,
Which now give life, and utt'rance to my pen.
Thy virtue, not thy rank, demands my lays;
'Tis not the Biſhop, but the Saint I praiſe.
Rais'd by that theme, I ſoar on wings more ſtrong,
And burſt forth into praiſe with-held too long.

Much did I wiſh, e'en whilſt I kept thoſe ſheep,
Which, for my curſe, I was ordain'd to keep;
Ordain'd, alas! to keep thro' need, not choice,
Thoſe ſheep which never heard their ſhepherd's voice,
Which did not know, yet would not learn their way,
Which ſtray'd themſelves, yet griev'd that I ſhould ſtray,
Thoſe ſheep, which my good Father (on his bier
Let filial duty drop the pious tear)
Kept well, yet ſtarv'd himſelf, e'en at that time,
Whilſt I was pure, and innocent of rhime,
Whilſt, ſacred dullneſs ever in my view,
Sleep at my bidding crept from pew to pew,

Much

Much did I wiſh, tho' little could I hope,
A friend in him, who was the friend of POPE.

His hand, ſaid I, my youthful ſteps ſhall guide,
And lead me ſafe where thouſands fall beſide;
His temper, his experience ſhall controul,
And huſh to peace the tempeſt of my ſoul;
His judgment teach me, from the critic ſchool,
How not to err, and how to err by rule;
Inſtruct me, mingle profit with delight,
Where POPE was wrong, where SHAKESPEARE was not right;
Where they are juſtly prais'd and where thro' whim,
How little's due to them, how much to him.
Rais'd 'bove the ſlavery of common rules,
Of common-ſenſe, of modern, ancient ſchools,
Thoſe feelings baniſh'd, which miſlead us all,
Fools as we are, and which we nature call,
He, by his great example, might impart
A better ſomething, and baptize it Art;
He, all the feelings of my youth forgot,
Might ſhew me what is taſte, by what is not;
By him ſupported, with a proper pride,
I might hold all mankind as fools beſide;
He (ſhould a world, perverſe and peeviſh grown,
Explode his maxims, and aſſert their own)

Might teach me, like himſelf, to be content,
And let their folly be their puniſhment;
Might, like himſelf, teach his adopted ſon,
'Gainſt all the world, to quote a WARBURTON.

Fool that I was, could I ſo much deceive
My ſoul with lying hopes; could I believe
That he, the ſervant of his Maker ſworn,
The ſervant of his Saviour, would be torn
From their embrace, and leave that dear employ,
The cure of ſouls, his duty and his joy,
For toys like mine, and waſte his precious time,
On which ſo much depended, for a rhime?
Should he forſake the taſk he undertook,
Deſert his flock, and break his paſt'ral crook?
Should he (forbid it Heaven) ſo high in place,
So rich in knowledge, quit the work of Grace,
And, idly wand'ring o'er the Muſe's hill,
Let the ſalvation of mankind ſtand ſtill?

Far, far be that from thee—yes, far from thee
Be ſuch revolt from Grace, and far from me
The will to think it—guilt is in the thought—
Not ſo, not ſo, hath WARBURTON been taught,
Not ſo learn'd Chriſt—Recall that day, well-known,
When (to maintain God's honour—and his own)

He

He call'd blaſphemers forth—Methinks I now
See ſtern rebuke enthroned on his brow,
And arm'd with tenfold terrors—from this tongue,
Where fiery zeal, and Chriſtian fury hung,
Methinks I hear the deep-ton'd thunders roll,
And chill with horror ev'ry ſinner's ſoul—
In vain they ſtrive to fly—flight cannot ſave,
And POTTER trembles even in his grave—
With all the conſcious pride of innocence,
Methinks I hear him, in his own defence,
Bear witneſs to himſelf, whilſt all men knew,
By Goſpel rules, his witneſs to be true.

O glorious man, thy zeal I muſt commend,
Tho' it depriv'd me of my deareſt friend.
The real motives of thy anger known,
WILKES muſt the juſtice of that anger own,
And, could thy boſom have been bar'd to view,
Pitied himſelf, in turn had pitied you.

Bred to the law, you wiſely took the gown,
Which I, like *Demas*, fooliſhly laid down.
Hence double ſtrength our *Holy Mother* drew:
Me ſhe got rid of, and made prize of you.
I, like an idle truant, fond of play,
Doting on toys, and throwing gems away,

Graſping

Graſping at ſhadows, let the ſubſtance ſlip;
But you, my *Lord*, renounc'd Attorneyſhip
With better purpoſe, and more noble aim,
And wiſely play'd a more ſubſtantial game.
Nor did *Law* mourn, bleſs'd in her younger ſon
For MANSFIELD does what GLOSTER would have done.

Doctor, *Dean*, *Biſhop*, *Gloſter*, and *My Lord*,
If haply theſe high titles may accord
With thy meek ſpirit, if the barren ſound
Of pride delights thee, to the topmoſt round
Of fortune's ladder got, deſpiſe not one,
For want of ſmooth hypocriſy undone,
Who, far below, turns up his wond'ring eye,
And, without envy, ſees thee plac'd ſo high,
Let not thy brain (as brains leſs potent might)
Dizzy, confounded, giddy with the height,
Turn round, and loſe diſtinction, loſe her ſkill
And wonted powers of knowing good from ill,
Of ſifting truth from falſhood, friends from foes;
Let GLOSTER well remember, how he roſe,
Nor turn his back on men who made him great;
Let him not, gorg'd with pow'r, and drunk with ſtate,

Forget

Forget what once he was, tho' now so high,
How low, how mean, and full as poor as I.

Cætera defunt.

It is preſumed the ſudden death of the Author will ſufficiently apologize for the Dedication remaining unfiniſhed. Jno. Cunningham

SERMON I.

JAMES v. 16th.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

FOR the particular occaſion on which theſe words were ſpoken, and the relation they bear to what preceded, I ſhall refer you to the chapter from whence they are taken, and at preſent conſider them as they ſtand independently, and aſſure us, that the duty of prayer, when practiſed by a righteous man, and offered up in a proper manner, is of great efficacy to avert miſ-

fortunes, and procure bleſſings; premiſing only, that, by a righteous man we are not to underſtand one who is perfectly pure, and free from ſin, but one who performs his duty to the utmoſt of his power, and makes up for any infirmity in his Obedience, by the ſtrength of his Faith, and the ſincerity of his Repentance.

The duty of prayer is in the preſent age by many entirely neglected, or imperfectly obſerved, and by ſome openly decried. There are many who diſallow any other application to God than that of the mind, and not a few who, however conſtant in the outward forms of prayer, do yet by their lives but too plainly ſhew that their minds are unaffected. Some too there are, who run into the contrary extreme, who are ſo unwarrantably attentive to the performance of this duty, as to neglect obligations which

are

are of much greater import, which are more immediately neceſſary for their own good, and the benefit of ſociety, and which of conſequence muſt be more agreeable to the will, and conducive to the glory, of God.

Whilſt miſtakes like theſe prevail, a conſideration of the duty of prayer cannot be out of ſeaſon; it cannot prejudice thoſe who beſt underſtand it, and may be ſerviceable to thoſe who do not.

Prayer is a ſolemn act of worſhipping the Supreme Being; wherein we, on the one hand, acknowledge our weakneſs and indigence, on the other his power and ability to afford us relief; it naturally implies ſome defect in him who offers it up, and ſome authority in him to whom it is offered to pardon and amend it; it ſuppo-

ſes God to be the Maker and Governor of all things, and ſo gracious and condeſcending, ſo potent and abſolute in his nature, as always to be ready to hear, and able to redreſs the Grievances of his Creatures, ſo that this duty is founded on the infinite goodneſs and power of God; he is infinitely good, and therefore willing, infinitely powerful, and therefore able to relieve us; and for theſe reaſons he is, and he alone can be, the proper object of our Prayers.

The Heathens themſelves, as they were fully perſuaded of theſe perfections in God, and of the great need in which they ſtood of having them exerted in their behalf, were alſo convinced that it was their duty to pray to him; and this duty was heartily acknowledged, earneſtly recommended, and ſtrictly practiſed by the wiſeſt and ſobereſt among them. The Scriptures, as they

every

every where abound with earneſt and pathetick exhortations to the religious performance hereof, ſo they afford us many ſtrong motives which the Heathens could not have; they ſupply us with the names of many great and good men who were exemplary in the performance of it, amongſt whom, as in all other works of Righteouſneſs, our bleſſed Lord ſhines with diſtinguiſhed luſtre; they fully inſtruct us both as to the Object to, and the manner in which they ought to be offered; they apply themſelves to our fears by the moſt ſevere threats, to our hopes by the moſt delightful promiſes, ſupplying us with an encouragement to, and laying a foundation for the performance of this duty, which the Heathens could not have, in the veracity of God himſelf; who hath ſaid and cannot lie; who hath declared and cannot

deny himſelf, that they who aſk ſhall receive.

The reaſonableneſs of this duty in general appears from the ſlighteſt attention to the particular branches of which it conſiſts. If we conſider Man merely as a Creature, as juſt come out of the hands of his Maker, as raiſed into being from the duſt of the earth, and, beſides many other, endued with thoſe diſtinguiſhing privileges, Reaſon and Immortality, ſure nothing can be more reaſonable than for him to pay his moſt ſubmiſſive and reverential homage to that Being who employs Omnipotence in conferring Benefits upon him; to exert his reaſon in the praiſe of him who gave it, and endeavour to recommend himſelf to his infinite goodneſs, leſt he fall under the terrors of his Almighty Power. The ideas of

Power

Power are in themſelves great and terrible; it naturally inſpires us with awe and reverence, even when it is lodged in human hands, whence it is liable to be ſnatched by innumerable accidents, and where it hangs but on the ſlender thread of life. What muſt it do then, when we conſider it infinite and unbounded, placed in the hands of a Being, who is ſubject to no accidents; whoſe exiſtence is not bounded by any time, but extends itſelf unlimited, unimpaired through all ages? What Reſpect, what Homage, what Adoration can be too great, when paid to ſuch a Being? Where can we find an office more agreeable to our Reaſon, where a better employment for our Immortality.

If we conſider Man as a Creature immerſt in ſin, corrupt in his very nature, and prone to all evil, continually tempted by

the Devil and the World from without, and betrayed by his own violent and head-ſtrong paſſions from within, upon ſuch a diſmal review, ſure nothing can be more reaſonable, than to have recourſe to his Almighty Father, to acknowledge his original weakneſs and infirmities, his actual ſins and tranſgreſſions, to expreſs his averſion to, and reſolution againſt them, unto him who is the perfection of Purity and Holineſs; to beg Pardon and Forgiveneſs of him who delighteth in mercy, and deſireth not the death of a Sinner; and to pray for the aſſiſtance of Grace from him, who giveth to them which aſk, who hath promiſed to ſend us the comfort of his holy ſpirit, who delighteth to dwell in the heart of the ſincere and contrite.

If we conſider Man as ſubject to all kinds of miſery, ſurrounded with difficulties and troubles

troubles which he can neither prevent nor remedy, with dangers which he can neither guard againſt nor repel, and with wants which he can neither foreſee nor relieve, we ſhall ſurely ſee abundant reaſon for him to apply to God, to lay himſelf open, to make his diſtreſſes known, and pray to God that he will deliver him out of all his troubles, defend him in all his dangers, and relieve him in all his wants. When men are under any preſſure or calamity, they naturally apply to ſuch of their fellow creatures as they think are inclined by the goodneſs of their diſpoſition, and enabled by their power or wealth to be of ſervice to them: if this is reaſonable and prudent, it is certainly much more ſo to make our addreſſes to God, whoſe goodneſs as much ſurpaſſes human goodneſs, as his power is beyond human power, who hath ſuch an abſolute command over trouble, ſickneſs, and any

other

other adverſity, that he ſaith unto them Go, and they go; who is of ſuch perfect Goodneſs, that he ſuſtaineth the Brutes, and feedeth the young Ravens which call upon him, that he openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteouſneſs.

To turn our eyes from theſe melancholy ſcenes of ſin and miſery, if we reflect upon the ſituation of Man, how impoſſible it was for him to avoid ſinning, and how impoſſible to avoid the puniſhment due to it; if we conſider him delivered from that terrible dilemma, and if not ſecured from ſinning, directed, which is almoſt equivalent, how to eſcape the conſequences of it; if we conſider God the Father as ordaining the means of our Redemption, God the Son as performing them, and God the Holy Ghoſt as reſiding in, and ſanctifying us, how can we abſtain from breaking out

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in the lively eloquence of the Pſalmiſt, Praiſe the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me praiſe his holy name, Praiſe the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his benefits. Such an unexpected, ſuch an undeſerved change in our affairs, ſo great a deliverance, ſuch a mighty ſalvation as it muſt neceſſarily excite our joy, ſo ſhould it quicken our gratitude, and incline us to return thee thanks, O God, as for our Creation, Preſervation, and all the Bleſſings of this life, ſo above all, for thine ineſtimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, for the means of Grace, and for the hope of Glory.

If we conſider, that the whole race of men are mutually related to each other, that their concerns are too cloſely connected to bear a ſeparation, that they came out of the hands of the ſame Creator, are ſuſtained

ſuſtained by the Providence of the ſame Preſerver, and purchaſed by the blood of the ſame Redeemer, we cannot but acknowledge the reaſonableneſs of the Duty which the Scriptures lay upon every man, of praying for his neighbour as well as for himſelf; of offering up his petitions to Almighty God, and interceding for them, that he will turn from them whatever may do them harm, and be pleaſed to give unto them what he ſees needful either for their bodies or their ſouls.

On the whole, if it is reaſonable that the Creature ſhould acknowledge his dependance on the Creator, that thoſe who have done amiſs ſhould confeſs it, and aſk forgiveneſs, that thoſe who ſtand in need of many good, and in fear of many evil things, ſhould petition for the obtaining of the one, and preventing of the other, if

it

it is reaſonable to return thanks for benefits received, and evils prevented, to love our brethren, and to pay regard to the concerns of thoſe perſons with whom our own are connected, then it is in all theſe ſeveral reſpects highly reaſonable, that we ſhould diſcharge the duty of Prayer to Almighty God.

This is ſo evident, that we ſhould ſcarce believe, did we not daily ſee it, that a rational creature could live in the groſs neglect and open contempt of a duty, which, merely as a rational creature, he cannot but know that he ought to perform; which is not more ſtrongly recommended by Scripture, than by Reaſon itſelf, the darling idol of the modern world; and the contempt of which muſt not only rank him amongſt the irreligious, but which he may perhaps think worſe, amongſt the unreaſonable part of

of the creation. Notwithſtanding this there are men in the world, and thoſe mighty Pretenders to Reaſon, who openly decry this duty, at leaſt all the external parts of it, well knowing that without them the duty itſelf cannot long ſubſiſt, and artfully found their objections againſt it, upon an acknowledgement of, and a ſeeming veneration for, the divine attributes, and the honour of God's nature.

If, ſay they, God is of infinite knowledge, as thoſe who pray to him muſt certainly allow, what occaſion is there for us to confeſs our ſins, and expreſs our ſorrow for them, to lay open our wants and neceſſities to him, who by the neceſſary perfection of his nature ſees into our hearts, and diſcerns every motion there much plainer than we can poſſibly expreſs them.

Such

Such objectors will do well to conſider, that our Prayers are not intended to give any information to God, which he before had not, but to implant deeply in our own breaſts a proper ſenſe of what we have done, and a due eſtimation of what we want; ſo that the pardon of our ſins, and ſupply of our neceſſities may have their due weight with us. Our thoughts come upon us ſo ſuddenly, and ſo quickly paſs away, that it is ſcarce poſſible accurately to remember the thoughts even of a few hours; but when we give them birth, and bring them forth in proper words, they are then ſtrongly impreſt on our minds, and by a conſtant repetition of the ſame means by which they firſt ſtruck root, muſt always live and flouriſh in our memories. When the thoughts which we entertain upon a ſurvey of our ſins and neceſſities ſo far influence us as to incline us to Prayer,

when

when we bring them forth before the Moſt High, cloathed in proper expreſſions and attended with ſuitable geſtures, they are thereby moſt deeply imprinted on our minds, and by a ſteady and uniform performance of this duty, are at laſt fixed in ſuch ſtrong colours, as never to be diſcharged; whereas had they never iſſued from the cloſet of our hearts, they might have been ſtrangled in the birth, or proved the children but of a melancholy moment.

To be in fault, and aſhamed to confeſs it and aſk pardon, to be in want, and aſhamed to acknowledge it and aſk relief, are moſt certain ſigns of an obſtinate and proud temper; a temper not at all qualified to receive bleſſings from God, who reſiſteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Before we can expect favours from God, we muſt entirely root out theſe faults, and in their

ſtead

ſtead implant humility and meekneſs; nor is there any better way of enabling us ſo to do, no other way of ſhewing that we have ſo done, than the performance of the duty of Prayer.

In the common affairs of this world we do not expect our faults to be pardoned, nor our wants to be relieved before they are made known; and ſurely in point of common decency we cannot expect ineſtimable bleſſings from a Being ſuch as God is, upon eaſier terms than thoſe which we perform to our Brethren, for things of little or no conſequence. However extenſive the divine knowledge may be, how intimately ſoever God may be acquainted with our wants before we cry unto him, yet we muſt not expect that he will intereſt himſelf in our behalf, until we ſhew by Prayer, that we are known not only to him, but alſo

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But, ſay they again, thoug
reaſonable and neceſſary to pra
of infinite knowledge, ſurely it
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is readier to hear than we to pr
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Thoſe who argue thus have ver
notions of the divine nature; th
God's Attributes abſtractedly fro
oppoſition to, each other. and the

being but ſo many rays derived from, and centered in the ſame Body of Light and Perfection. His mercy is not inconſiſtent with his Juſtice, neither does his wiſdom exclude, or is it excluded by his Goodneſs; he is infinitely merciful, in ſuch a manner as to be, at the ſame time, infinitely juſt; infinitely wiſe, in ſuch a manner as to be infinitely good. We muſt not therefore entertain ſuch high notions of any one Perfection, as to exalt it at the expence of any other; we muſt not, as thoſe do who make God's goodneſs an argument againſt prayer, magnify his goodneſs at the expence of his Wiſdom. For whatever goodneſs it might ſhew, yet certainly it would be no mark of Wiſdom to confer Bleſſings on us, whatſoever we ſtood in need of, without our petitioning for them. Thoſe perſons can never be the proper objects of God's goodneſs who are above praying for the

effects of it. The tendereſt Father breathing, although he plainly diſcerns in the whole behaviour of an offending Child that he is heartily ſorry for his Offence, doth not extend to him the uſual expreſſions of his Love and Favour, till he makes acknowledgement of his crime, and aſks pardon for it; neither will God, how great ſoever his delight in mercy and goodneſs, exert thoſe amiable attributes in our behalf, till we call upon him by Prayer and Supplication. If our wants were to be redreſſed, and our deſires fulfilled without any thing done on our parts, we might impute ſuch bleſſings to any rather than the true cauſe, and ſo deprive God of the glory of his diſpenſations; whereas now, when they are made, as it were, the conſequence of our Prayers, we cannot but be ſenſible, that to God we owe them, and to God we ought to be thankful for them.

But,

But, ſay they, though it may be reaſonable and neceſſary to pray to a Being of infinite knowledge and goodneſs, ſurely it cannot be ſo, to pray to a Being of abſolute immutability, who is not a Man that he ſhould lie, nor the ſon of Man, that he ſhould repent; in whom there is no variableneſs, nor ſhadow of turning; ſo that our prayers cannot have any effect to the changing of his purpoſe, and reverſing his decrees.

God's threats and promiſes have always a regard to the Behaviour of Men, and have a condition implied if not expreſt; ſo that thoſe who fall off from virtue unto vice, inſtead of being heirs to his promiſes, become liable to his threats; and thoſe who return from vice to virtue, inſtead of being obnoxious to his threats become entitled to his promiſes; the change

is not in God, but in us; his fixt and immutable purpoſe is to purſue vice with puniſhment, and virtue with reward, through all the varying ſcenes of man's behaviour; and therefore, upon a change in that, he alters his meaſures, not thereby becoming mutable, but continuing conſtant to his firſt reſolution, of puniſhing the wicked, and rewarding the good. It is therefore no diminution to the divine immutability to liſten to the Petitions of his Creatures, and grant them thoſe bleſſings upon their praying to him, which he had withheld from them upon their neglecting to do it; to ſupply or prevent thoſe wants which he had brought or determined to bring upon them, when they acknowledge their dependance and confidence in his goodneſs, together with thoſe other virtues, which Prayer does naturally ſuppoſe, and outwardly expreſs.

Trifling

Trifling as theſe objections are found on examination, they are by much the ſtrongeſt and moſt plauſible that the enemies of Prayer have been able to advance; they are of ſuch a nature as to bring the underſtanding, as well as the integrity, of thoſe who broach them into diſrepute, and make us doubtful which to deſpiſe moſt, the wickedneſs of their hearts, or the weakneſs of their heads. Little can be offered for thoſe who object to the myſteries of our moſt holy religion, but leſs can be ſaid for thoſe who object to the duties of it; the former, though not againſt, are yet much above our reaſon, but the lattter lie exactly level to our underſtandings, and are not leſs ſtrongly recommended by Reaſon, than by Revelation; they are ſuch as the heathen Philoſophers were proud to embelliſh their ſyſtems with, though they

cannot be digeſted by ſome of our politer Chriſtians.

It is not however to be wondered at, that thoſe who go on in a courſe of wickedneſs, ſhould object to duties ſo contrary to their headſtrong paſſions, and be willing to overthrow thoſe laws which lay a reſtraint upon their inclinations. It is Intereſt, and not Reaſon, which ſpeaks in them, they are againſt Religion upon no other account, but becauſe Religion is againſt them, and think Chriſtianity unreaſonable for no other cauſe, but that they wiſh it ſo. In general it may be obſerved, that the lives of thoſe who object to this duty of Prayer, or any other enjoined in Scripture, are ſufficient to confute their objections, which can come with no ſtrength, but from the mouths of thoſe who

who appear in their lives to be at leaſt good moral men: but ſuch, I truſt, are in a much fairer way of believing the myſteries than objecting to the duties of the Chriſtian Religion, which is not leſs remarkable for matters of Faith than Practice, for the Revelation of truths, than the perfecting of virtue.

Now to God the Father, &c. &c.

SERMON

SERMON II.

JAMES v. 16th.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

THE Nature of Prayer, the Grounds on which that Duty is founded, and the reaſonableneſs of our performing it, are what I apprehend few can be ignorant of; none indeed, who are conſtant in the worſhip of God and the ſervice of the Sanctuary. But I fear, we have not the ſame reaſon to believe, that the right manner of performing this duty is ſo generally known, or at leaſt that it is ſo generally practiſed; ſince very ſlight obſervation may

may assure us, that a great part even of those who strictly comply with the formalities of prayer, are either ignorant of the manner in which it should be performed so as to prove effectual, or indifferent whether it proves effectual or not. I shall make it my business therefore to shew,

First, The qualifications requisite to make our prayers acceptable to God—— and in order to engage us more heartily therein, shall,

Secondly, Mention those advantages which we may reasonably expect from a due discharge of that Duty.

There are, it is to be feared, many persons in the world who imagine themselves worthy performers of this duty, merely becaus

becauſe they are regular and conſtant in ſaying over a few prayers without rectifying the temper of their minds, or altering the method of their lives. But alas! how much are theſe miſtaken! No petition can poſſibly be acceptable to God, which is not offered up with proper Affections, which is not attended with proper Actions. Was it merely the repetition of a Prayer which called down Bleſſings from above, thoſe who pray through oſtentation, and a deſire of being ſeen of men, or through prudential and intereſted motives, might expect them equally with the ſincere and contrite, and thoſe who, like the heathen, and our modern enthuſiaſts, make uſe of long prayers, might expect bleſſings ſo much greater than others, as their prayers are longer. But of the firſt of theſe our Saviour has aſſured us that they have their reward; that is, they have the good opinion

of

of men, which they ſought after, and muſt not expect any reward from God; of the latter, he implies to us that they are not heard for their much ſpeaking; and of all in general whoſe prayers are outſide ſhew, he pronounces, that the Lord deteſteth thoſe who approach him with their lips, whilſt their heatrs are far from him.

Sincerity is the life of prayer; it is that which makes it an act of true devotion, and of high price in the ſight of God; and this virtue we may be ſure we have in a good degree, when we endeavour to purify our minds from all iniquity, and aſk nothing but with a good and upright intention. God, who ſees the heart, will not merely conſider whether the things we pray for are good in themſelves, but whether they will be ſo in our uſe of them; whether we ſhall employ them to ſuch

good

good and virtuous purpoſes, as may promote his glory and our own good. If we therefore pray with a corrupt intention, we muſt not expect that God will incline his ear to us; for the Apoſtle aſſures us, that on this account many aſk, and receive not, becauſe they aſk amiſs, that they may conſume it upon their luſts.

To ſincerity we muſt alſo add humility. This virtue naturally ariſes from the duty itſelf, the performance of which ſuppoſes want in us who aſk, and power in him of whom we aſk; dependance on our parts, and ſovereignty on God's. This humility conſiſts not only in being ſenſible of and acknowledging our wants, but alſo in being ſenſible of, and acknowledging our unworthineſs to have them redreſt. The man who is not ſenſible of his wants, will not be ſenſible of relief; he who feels his neceſſities,

neceſſities, and yet is too proud to acknowledge them, will be too proud alſo to acknowledge the hand by which he is relieved; he laſtly, who is both ſenſible of his wants, and humble enough to acknowledge them, but yet is puffed up with an high opinion of his own worthineſs, will impute the relief of them not to God's free mercies, but to a conſideration of his own deſerts; inſtead of coming boldly to the throne of Grace, he will come raſhly to the throne of Judgement; inſtead of pleading and relying upon the merits of Chriſt, he will plead and rely upon his own. To make our prayers therefore acceptable to God, and our humility complete, we muſt acknowledge that our ſins and wants are great, but our unworthineſs to have them pardoned and relieved ſtill greater; we muſt confeſs that when we have done our beſt, we are but unprofitable ſervants; we

muſt

muſt throw ourſelves upon the mercy of God, and plead no merits but thoſe of Chriſt.

This humility of the heart will naturally produce that of the body, or a grave and reverend deportment in our devotions, expreſſive of the low opinion which we have of ourſelves, and of the high one which we entertain of God. When we are in the preſence of an earthly monarch we place a particular regard on all our words and actions, ſo that they may declare the high veneration we have of his majeſty and power; and if this is reaſonable, ſurely it is much more ſo, that we ſhould obſerve the ſame method when we come into the preſence of the king of Heaven, and expreſs the utmoſt reverence when we conſider that the place we ſtand on is holy ground, is ſanctified and conſecrated

crated by the gracious preſence of God himſelf.

To theſe qualifications of an acceptable prayer, we muſt alſo add that of Confidence, or a firm perſuaſion that we ſhall obtain what we aſk for, if it is expedient for us. Upon firſt coming into the preſence of God, and conſidering his nature and our own, we ſhould naturally be more apt to fear and to deſpair, than to repoſe any confidence in him. To conſider him as exalted in majeſty and power, ourſelves as weak and impotent; him as a moſt pure and holy Being, ourſelves as ſtained and polluted with ſin, muſt breed in us apprehenſions far different from thoſe pleaſing ſenſations which Confidence inſpires. But when we conſider that he is a God of Mercy, long-ſuffering, and of great goodneſs, that he ſo loved the world, as

to ſend his only ſon to ſuffer for it, that he hath commanded us to pray to him, and promiſed to hear and grant our requeſts, the fear which we before felt immediately ſubſides, and Confidence, in its higheſt ſenſe, ariſes in it's ſtead; Confidence of being heard, forgiven, and relieved. We then find that not to pray to him is to diſobey his authority, and not to believe that our Prayers ſhall be heard and granted, is to derogate from his Goodneſs, and diſtruſt his promiſes. We muſt not therefore let our humility ſo far prevail as to plunge us into deſpair, or abate our Confidence; nor our confidence get ſo much the better, as to overthrow our humility, and hurry us into preſumption; but let both move in their proper ſphere, and keep our ſouls in a due temper; when we conſider our wants and unworthineſs let us be humble, when we conſider God's mercies let us be confident,

and

and ſo offer up our Prayers a reaſonable and acceptable ſacrifice.

Another qualification of an acceptable Prayer, is Attention; this is not to be acquired ſo eaſily as ſome may imagine; our thoughts are in a perpetual flux, and of ſo volatile a nature, that it is no eaſy matter to keep them fixt and ſteady, even when we are retired from the world, and all outward objects are taken away. The mind is ever roving, and ſo diſtracted with the ſucceſſion of freſh ideas which ariſe involuntarily in her, that it is no contemptible taſk, after ſhe has made choice of any one, to ſhut out the reſt, and keep herſelf attentive to that alone. Beſides, the cares of this world are apt to intrude, and interrupt us, the enticing allurements of pleaſures are ever ready to inſinuate themſelves, and the Devil is always at hand to ſecond every in-

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the vaſt conſequences of thoſe things which are the ſubjects of his petition; and the ſame degree of Attention may we hope to obtain, if we will convince ourſelves, that in our Prayers we come before the King of Kings, and that what we petition for is of the laſt conſequence to us, no leſs than the ſupply of all our wants, no leſs than the forgiveneſs of all our ſins.

If we thus uſe every method to ſettle ourſelves into an habit of Attention, if we endeavour to repreſs every wandering thought in the birth, and are heartily ſorry when they force themſelves into our minds, if we ſincerely pray that God will enable us, by his grace, to overcome them, and give us this virtue to a greater degree, than our natural infirmities will permit us to acquire of ourſelves, we have then all the reaſon in the world to conclude, that God will crown

perfect performance;
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than our nature will enable us
but will look upon our infirm
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To Attention we muſt add Fe
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tranſports, and blaſphemouſly fancy that they are, in the language of a modern Enthuſiaſt, ſenſibly actuated by the Holy Ghoſt. Fervency, no doubt, is a very neceſſary and happy qualification of Prayer; it introduces us to a more intimate familiarity with God, and at the ſame time it procures us bleſſings on earth, in ſome meaſure gives us a foretaſte of Heaven. But great caution is requiſite, that this fervency be ſuch as is required by God; it ſhould be a gentle, pleaſing, heavenly flame, and not an headſtrong and outrageous fire, which hurries men into Enthuſiaſm; it ſhould, like the Sun, not only afford a barren warmth to the ſoul, but ſuch an heat, as may promote fruitfulneſs in well doing.

To the forgoing qualifications we muſt add Perſeverance. We muſt not imagine,

that a tranſitory ſpark of devotion will inflame our Prayers ſo as to make them a ſacrifice acceptable to God. Some heavy misfortune, or impending danger, ſome ſtroke of ſickneſs, ſome bad conſequence of our evil courſes; ſome more than uſually ſevere remonſtrance of conſcience, may make the wickedeſt man alive, in his agony and fright, betake himſelf to Prayer, till his danger is over and his conſcience lulled aſleep. But the man who is really in earneſt, and concerned for the ſucceſs of his prayers, who is willing to perform the conditions, that he may be entitled to the bleſſings which God has promiſed, in whatever ſtate he is, whether in ſickneſs or in health, in proſperity or adverſity, perſeveres ſteadily in an habit of Prayer; he reflects, that thoſe who are ſo often in want, ſo often entangled in ſin, ſhould often pray for the relief of the one and the forgive-

forgiveneſs of the other; and he conſiders it as his great bleſſing, that in his diſtreſſes he has ſo kind a God to whom he may betake himſelf, ſo prevailing a means as Prayer by which he may apply to him. If his deſires are not immediately granted, he does not deſiſt from this duty, but perſeveres inviolably in it, firmly believing that he ſhall ſee the goodneſs of the Lord in the land of the living. God may for a time, in his wiſe and good providence, with-hold our deſires from us, and yet fulfill them afterwards, when they more contribute to his glory or our good; and the parable of the unjuſt Judge, and poor Widow, doth very ſtrongly enforce on us that duty, which our Saviour intended to confirm in it, always to pray, and not to faint.

To the abovementioned qualifications of an acceptable Prayer we muſt add, laſtly, a lively Faith in Chriſt; ſuch a Faith as may be a proper foundation for us to build the other qualifications upon, ſuch a Faith as doth not overthrow good works, but produceth them, herſelf working by Love. The light of natural reaſon directs us to offer up our Prayers to God only; but the Scriptures further inform us, that they muſt be offered up through Chriſt. It is by his merits only, that we can expect to have our ſins forgiven, and our wants ſupplied. He is the merciful High Prieſt, who having felt our infirmities has learned to compaſſionate them; having experienced our diſtreſſes, is become willing to relieve them; and having borne temptation, is both able and willing to aſſiſt us in, and deliver us out of it: he receives our prayers, offers them

them up to God, intercedes in our behalf, and backs our petitions with his own prevailing merits; ſo that there is no good thing which we may not hope for, through his mediation.

Pleaſure, Honour, and Profit, are the three great idols of the modern world, and engroſs the adoration of much the greateſt part of mankind, the Senſual, the Ambitious, and the Covetous. It is through the inducements of theſe prevailing paſſions, that our hearts are entirely weaned from the conſideration of another life, and rivetted on this; it is one or all of theſe which make us ſit looſe to the duty of Prayer, and think every moment ſpent therein precious time loſt from the purſuit of our darling objects. But if it will appear (as to an unprejudiced perſon I am ſure it will) that Prayer is the beſt means of affording

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ing not only one of theſe advantages ſeparately, but all of them conjunctively, and each of them in a greater degree than we could enjoy without it, then we certainly have a very ſtrong argument to enforce this duty, as well upon the intereſts as the conſciences of mankind.

The man of Pleaſure may boaſt of his enjoyments, and thoſe noble indulgencies of his ſenſuality, in which the Brutes may vie with him, nay, in one reſpect, far excell him, in that they feel no remorſe, no compunction afterwards, and to ſuch an one (whilſt he continues ſuch) it will be in vain to repreſent the more ſolid, laſting, and ſuperior pleaſures which are to be found in a ſincere performance of the duty of Prayer. But if we make our appeal to the hearts of thoſe who are inflamed with true devotion, and can reliſh the exerciſes

erciſes of Piety, we may be eaſily ſatisfied, that one moment ſpent in the diſcharge of this duty, will much outweigh an whole life ſpent in the indulgence of Senſuality and Libertiniſm. So much as the Soul is ſuperior to the body, ſo much are the pleaſures of the one beyond thoſe of the other. Corporeal gratifications are violent, but not laſting; they ſoon cloy, and pall upon the appetite, and, notwithſtanding the charm of variety, grow tedious and inſipid. The pleaſures of the ſoul are more ſedate and temperate, more laſting and permanent; the more we uſe, the more we reliſh them, the longer we are acquainted with them, the more lovely they appear, and the ſtronger they engage us. But of all the pleaſures of the ſoul, thoſe which ſhe receives from the communication of God in the exerciſe of Prayer, are undoubtedly the moſt excellent, when ſhe mounts upon

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may talk of pleaſure, it is never to be found till we become acquainted with God, till we are made ſenſible of his love, and enjoy that happy friendſhip, and communion with him, which is only expreſſed and maintained by Prayer, and ſpiritual exerciſes.

But the performance of this duty is not only attended with Pleaſure, but Honour alſo. To enjoy the intimacy and friendſhip of a monarch, to be admitted to his Preſence at all times, to be at liberty to preſent our petitions and be aſſured of ſucceſs, is deſervedly eſteemed a great honour; but how much greater is it to enjoy the friendſhip of the King of Kings, to have freedom of acceſs at all times, to lay open our wants, and make our diſtreſſes known, with that freedom and liberty which a man uſeth to his friend. A mighty privilege

this

this ſurely! an honour as much greater than the familiarity of an earthly king, as God is ſuperior to the greateſt monarch; an honour, which is not to be ſought through difficulties, dangers, and uncertainties, but may be eaſily, ſafely, and certainly obtained by the meaneſt man on earth; an honour, which does not depend upon the breath of an unſtable and miſjudging man, but on the favour of an immutable and all-wiſe God; an honour which is not to be acquired by violating our integrity, and contradicting the frame of our nature, but by preſerving and complying with it; which is not to be ſought through the labyrinth of lies, flattery, and deceit, but in the plain road of truth, ſincerity, and honeſty; which is not to be obtained by envy, hatred, and ambition, but by love, charity, and humility; an honour which will not leave us in the grave,

but

but accompany us to, and be perfected in another life.

To the conſideration of Pleaſure and Honour, let us add that of Profit alſo; and Profit redounding to us both in temporal and ſpiritual matters. Prayer is the beſt means of obtaining God's favour for the acquiſition of what we want, and the Preſervation of what we have. If we ſearch the ſcriptures, we cannot but obſerve the great prevalence of this duty with God, and have inſtances, in the hiſtorical parts of them, of the great temporal bleſſings which are to be procured by it, which are at large ſet forth by Solomon.

If thy people Iſrael be ſmitten down before the enemy; if Heaven be ſhut up, and there be no rain; if there be in the land famine, or peſtilence, or if thy people

from their affliction, and
cauſe.

Thus, according to Solomo
labours under the miſeries of
ful war, Prayer is the ſureſt m
cure a glorious victory, and a h
if the windows of Heaven be ſ
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the fertile ſhowers, ſo that the
bring forth her fruits, that th
dance and ſkip, and the valley
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purge the air, and procure for us health and plenty. In a word, whatever misfortunes we labour under, whether public or private, a due diſcharge of this duty is able to remove them, and obtain God's bleſſing upon ourſelves, and families, our friends and acquaintance, upon every thing we have, and every thing we do.

To theſe advantages, which relate only to this life, let us alſo add thoſe which naturally lead us to happineſs hereafter. Let us reflect what an increaſe of grace, what a confirmation of faith, what a quickening of hope we may expect herefrom; and laſtly, let us reflect how much Prayer muſt conduce to the advancement of virtue, and holineſs of living.

It naturally breeds in us due apprehenſions of God and ourſelves; it ſets before

us the perfections of the Deity in their full glory; it ſuppoſes them, as to his moral attributes, the objects of our imitation, and makes them the ſubjects of our contemplation; ſo that a conſtant performance of this duty can ſcarce fail of awakening our emulation, and as it were inſenſibly conforming us to the image of God. As it is ſcarce poſſible for a great ſinner to continue conſtant in this duty, ſo is it as unlikely for a man who continues conſtant in Prayer to adhere to any wilful ſin. Prayer is the natural enemy of Sin; it cannot conſiſt with it, but muſt either conquer or be conquered by it; Prayer is the natural friend and ally of Holineſs, and cannot ſubſiſt without it, ſo as to be worthy the name of Prayer; Prayer has a natural tendency to produce holineſs, and holineſs is abſolutely neceſſary to ſanctify our Prayers.

Now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON

SERMON III.

MATHEW vi. 9th.

Our Father which art in Heaven.

AFTER our Saviour had given his diſciples a charge not to imitate the hypocrites, who prayed ſtanding in the ſynagogues, and at the corners of the ſtreets, that they might be ſeen of men, nor to follow the example of the heathen, who uſed vain repetitions, and thought they ſhould be heard for their much ſpeaking, he proceeds to direct them in what manner they ſhould offer up their prayers, and delivers that form which hath juſtly been

the admiration of all ages, and the divine pattern whereby the Chriſtian church hath modelled her devotions,

If we conſider the Perſon who gave this Prayer to us, it claims our higheſt regard upon his account; or if we duly weigh the value of the gift itſelf, it deſerves our eſpecial eſteem upon its own. The Perſon who gave it to us, was no other than our bleſſed Lord, who knew the wants and infirmities of our nature, being man, and the propereſt manner in which we could petition for the redreſs and relief of them, being God. The Prayer itſelf, whether we conſider the order and harmony of it, the connexion of the parts, or the beauty of the whole, is worthy of the higheſt admiration. It is ſo plain, and perſpicuous, that the weakeſt capacity may underſtand it; ſo ſhort and conciſe, that the weakeſt memory

memory may retain it; ſo full and comprehenſive, that all our wants may very properly be reduced within the compaſs of it; in a word, it is of ſuch intrinſick worth, that unbelievers muſt admire, though none but Chriſtians can worthily repeat it.

Our church hath ſhewn that deference to this Prayer, that ſhe hath inſerted it in every diſtinct office of the whole Liturgy, rightly judging, that it would diffuſe a brightneſs around it, and atone for the imperfections of thoſe ſervices amongſt which it was placed; ſenſible that there muſt be imperfections in all human compoſitions (though, vanity apart, our Liturgy is as perfect a work as humanity muſt ever hope to reach) ſhe endeavours, by the frequent repetition of this Prayer, where all is perfect, all is worthy of the great author, to make up for her own defects; and pro-

vidently conſidering how unſettled the mind of man is, how perpetually roving from one idea to another, even during the time of prayer, ſhe hath wiſely contrived to recall and fix his wandering thoughts, which the chains of human eloquence are too weak to bind, by frequently calling upon him to join in the repetition of that Prayer, which, if we had not the word of God for it, would of itſelf proclaim its divine original.

The ſame regard which the church pays to this prayer in her publick ſervices, doth it become every pious Chriſtian to pay to it in his private devotions. Though, the ſoul pouring out herſelf before her Maker in ſecret, is left at greater liberty than in the great congregation, and is not bound by ſet forms of human compoſition, yet even there ſhe is not freed from this form,

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and if ſhe hath any true judgment of the real value of things, will not deſire to be. Man, retired from the world, may take a greater ſcope, more explicitly dwell upon his wants, and acknowledge his ſins; but, after all, he will find them here ſummed up and epitomized in ſuch a manner, and in ſuch words, as will put the higheſt eloquence of man to the bluſh.

As the good man will always uſe this Prayer, becauſe Chriſt hath commanded it, ſo the wiſe man will uſe it, becauſe he can find none that is comparable with it; it is the only Prayer which many, and the beſt which all can repeat; it is, in a word, that Prayer which the good Chriſtian will regulate all his devotions by, and which he will never omit to make a part of them.

Thus

Thus much obſerved in general, I ſhall make it my buſineſs to ſet before you, in as plain and practical a manner as poſſible, the true purport of each part of this divine Prayer, to mention the proper affections, and enforce the reſpective duties which ought to accompany our repetition of it, beginning with Our Father which art in Heaven. In my conſideration of which words I ſhall ſhew,

Firſt, In what reſpects God is ſaid to be our Father.

Secondly, Why we are taught in our Prayers to make uſe of the name of Father, rather than any other.

Thirdly, Why we are inſtructed to ſay our, and not my Father.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, In what reſpect God is ſaid to be in Heaven.

Fifthly and laſtly, Why we are taught to make a particular mention of God's reſidence in Heaven, in our Prayers.

One of the reſpects in which God is ſaid to be our Father, is Creation. This is a language uſual even with Heathen writers, who acknowledging God to be the Maker of the world, do frequently ſtile him the Father of it; ſuppoſing the act of Creation to be equivalent to that of generation, and that we are as much the children of him who created us in general, as of that individual perſon who begat us in particular. In this reſpect, God is the Father of all things, and the generations of the Heaven and the Earth, confeſs his Paternity; the rain claims him for a Father, and the drops

drops of dew declare their having been begotten by him; but in a more eminent and exalted ſenſe he is the Father of Man, having created him after his own image; whence Adam is called the Son of God, and Man may more eſpecially ſay with the Prophet, Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?

Preſervation is another reaſon for our calling God Father, and the continuation of our exiſtence a perpetual obligation on us to make uſe of that name. If the firſt giving of being is a proper foundation of Paternity, the preſervation of that Being, which is not improperly ſtiled a Continued Creation, muſt be a foundation of Paternity likewiſe; ſo that God, who is our Father in right of having graciouſly created us, is ſtill farther ſo, in right of having no leſs graciouſly preſerved us.

Redemption

Redemption is another reaſon for our calling God Father. The diſobedience of our firſt parents brought themſelves and their poſterity into ſo miſerable an eſtate, their nature was ſo corrupted, their underſtanding ſo darkened, and their will ſo perverſe, that it was impoſſible for them to fulfil the law of nature, and without fulfilling it, it was abſolutely certain, that they muſt fall into condemnation. In this deplorable condition, the mercy of God regarded us; he made a covenant with his only begotten Son, that he ſhould come into the world, and die for mankind; and, upon the merit of that, cancel the hand-writing of the law, which bore ſo hard upon us; that he ſhould afford us eaſier conditions, greater aſſiſtances, and more glorious promiſes, that he ſhould deprive Sin of her ſtrength, ſwallow up Death in Victory, and lead Captivity captive; that

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he ſhould redeem us from the claim of Hell, and reinſtate us in our title to the joys of Heaven. For this reaſon therefore it is alſo, that we confeſs the Paternity of God, that we joyfully look upon our Creator and Preſerver as amiably cloathed with the mercies of a Redeemer, and as thereby acquiring a freſh title to the name of Father, in that he hath begotten us from the death of Sin, unto the life of Righteouſneſs.

Regeneration is another reaſon for our calling God Father. In reſpect of Creation, and Preſervation, all things in general may call upon God by this name; in reſpect of thoſe many excellent endowments by which human nature is exalted above the inferior parts of the creation, and in which ſhe bears the image of God, the whole race of men may with equal propriety make uſe of this appellation; and

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the Paternity ariſing from Redemption is as univerſal as the Satisfaction of Chriſt, who died for all men; but in reſpect of Regeneration, no one can call God Father, who is not actually entered into the Goſpel Covenant, and become a member of Jeſus Chriſt, who hath not been ſprinkled with the laver of Regeneration, and ſanctified by the Holy Ghoſt; whoſoever believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt, is born of God. If we conſider indeed the wonderful alteration which is made in us by the gracious operations of God's holy Spirit in our Regeneration, how thoroughly we are purified when baptized with the Holy Ghoſt and with fire, upon what different principles we think, ſpeak, and act, we ſhall readily ſee that ſuch an alteration may juſtly be ſtiled a new birth, we who have undergone it new Creatures, and God who hath perfected it in us, and created us in good

works

works unto Chriſt Jeſus, upon this account alſo a Father to us.

Adoption is another reaſon for our calling God Father. It hath been uſual among men, for thoſe who are childleſs to adopt the children of others, and to confer the ſame obligations on, and expect the ſame affection and obedience from them, as if they were their own offspring. Thus hath God dealt with us; he hath predeſtinated us to the adoption of Children, by Jeſus Chriſt, to himſelf, and hath given us the ſpirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. But the motives on which men adopt children, and thoſe on which God adopts us, are widely different. They fly to adoption as the laſt reſource and comfort of their ſolitary condition, as an artificial means of ſupplying themſelves with what Nature hath denied them, and in expecta-

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tion of pleaſure and bleſſing to themſelves. Whereas God hath adopted us, not for his own, but for our ſake; not that he may be a Father, but that we may be children; the love is all his, the advantage all our own.

Having thus ſeen in what reſpects we call God Father, I proceed, Secondly, to ſhew, Why we are taught in our prayers to make uſe of the name of Father, rather than any other.

If we conſider with what affections of the mind our prayers ought always to be accompanied, with what humility and reverence, with what love and confidence, with what reſolution of ſubmiſſion and obedience, we ſhall find that no other name could ſo naturally inſpire us with them, as this of Father. The idea of

Omnipotence is great and terrible, and, abſtractedly conſidered, will indeed ſufficiently excite our humility and reverence, but by no means our love. The idea of infinite Goodneſs is truly amiable and lovely, but, conſidered in itſelf, not at all calculated to raiſe in us humility and fear. The idea of perfect Juſtice will breed deſpair, and the conſideration of infinite Mercy create preſumption rather than confidence. Eternity and Immenſity ſtrike us with admiration, but are above our comprehenſion; and perfect Holineſs and Purity, though exceeding lovely in themſelves, are too bright and dazzling for the eyes of ſinners. But in the name of Father all theſe perfections of the Deity are collectively underſtood, as centered in the ſame perſon, as moving in the moſt perfect harmony, as being in fact the ſame ſimple eſſence diſplaying itſelf

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ſeveral ways, and demanding of us ſeveral affections.

Humility and reverence are expreſſions of reſpect, which all good children pay to their earthly parents, and which, if they are ſincere when they call God Father, they muſt in a much greater degree pay to him. His adorable Majeſty, his incomprehenſible Greatneſs, and Almighty Power, demand this of us. There is nothing which more powerfully works upon us to love any perſon, than his having conferred favours on us, and given us expreſſions of his good will and affection; and the greater his good will appears to be, the greater the favours are which we receive, the greater in proportion ſhould our love be to him. Now, as there is no perſon who hath conferred upon us, in any compariſon, ſo great benefits as God, ſo there is no

name ſo proper to remind us of them, as this of Father, which preſents him to our thoughts at once as our Creator, Preſerver, and Redeemer, as regenerating us by his holy Spirit, and adopting us in his bleſſed Son; and conſequently no name is ſo proper to excite in us that ardent love and affection which God requires.

Upon coming into the preſence of a God, who declares himſelf of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, ſinners ſhould naturally tremble and deſpair; but the name of Father conveys to us ſo tender an idea, as calms our terrors, and inſpires hope and confidence, teaching us, that if our Fathers, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto their children, how much more ſhall our Father which is in Heaven, give to thoſe who call upon him? But notwithſtanding the name of Father gives us ſo favourable

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an idea, yet there is in it ſufficient awe and dignity to excite and claim our obedience. Parents after the fleſh love their children, liſten to their petitions, forgive their faults, and relieve their wants; but parents after the fleſh expect alſo to be obeyed; and ſo does God; we have no title to his mercy till we endeavour, by a ſincere, though imperfect, obdience, to ſatisfy his Juſtice.

When we aſk any favours of our acquaintance, and meet with a denial, we are apt to harbour a reſentment againſt them, and to impute their refuſal to indifference, pride, ill-nature, or ſuch like motives; but when our parents deny our requeſts we feel no ſuch reſentments, we are well ſatisfied of their love, and repute even their denial an argument of it. Thus, when we offer up our prayers to God, we are, by making uſe of the name of Father,

taught the moſt profound ſubmiſſion and reſignation, committing the ſucceſs of our prayers entirely to his pleaſure, and determining to look on the afflictions which he lays on us as Fatherly corrections, and on the things which he withholds from us, as ſuch which it is more our intereſt to want than to obtain. Thus we ſee, that the reaſon why we are taught in our prayers to make uſe of the name of Father, rather than any other, is, becauſe that name is more proper than any other to ſet before us the mercies we have received, and inſpire us with ſuch affections, as ought to ſanctify our prayers.

The next thing in courſe is to enquire, Why we are taught in our prayers to ſay *our*, and not *my* Father.

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We are the children of God only in an improper ſenſe, and as the phraſe of generation is applied unto ſeveral acts of the ſame nature with, or is attended with the ſame conſequences as generation in its proper ſenſe. But Chriſt is truly and properly the Son of God, by a true and proper generation; we are ſons in ſuch a manner as to have our ſonſhip in common with others, ſo that any other part of the creation may join with us in calling upon God as a Father; and therefore we ſay *our* Father. Chriſt is a Son in ſuch a manner, that no one can call God Father in the ſame ſenſe which he does; and therefore *my* Father ſeems an expreſſion which, though not improper in our mouths, is yet moſt proper in his.

In Scripture our Lord ſeems deſignedly induſtrious to diſtinguiſh between our Son-

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We are all the children of the ſame Father, we have all one Creator and Preſerver, and ought therefore to exerciſe an univerſal charity, in imitation of God's univerſal Providence, who cauſeth the ſun to riſe, and the rain to deſcend both upon the juſt and the unjuſt. But a more particular love is due to our fellow Chriſtians; for theſe we ought to pray with the greateſt zeal, with theſe we ought to live in the moſt perfect harmony, and as we are the children of one Father, namely, God, and the members of one Body, namely, Chriſt, ſo ought we to have but one heart, and one mind.

On the whole therefore, if when we ſay *our* Father, our hearts are filled with humility and reverence, with love and confidence, with ſubmiſſion and obedience, with charity and benevolence, we may with good reaſon conclude that we are properly qualified

lified to repeat theſe words, that we are indeed God's Children, and he our Father. But on the contrary, if our hearts are puffed up with pride and haughtineſs, ſunk into indifference, or overcome with diſtruſt, if there lurk in us any ſeeds of diſcontent and diſobedience to God, of envy, hatred, malice, or uncharitableneſs to man, this name will but aggravate our guilt, and increaſe our condemnation, in that ſo great mercies vouchſafed to us by God, and preſented to our thoughts by the name of Father, have had no greater effect on us, nor been ſufficient to root out thoſe paſſions, which are directly repugnant to his nature. To come into God's preſence with the name of Father in our mouths, unleſs we have the affections flowing from it ever warm at our hearts, and influencing our lives, is a piece of hypocriſy which cannot lye hid from God's infinite knowledge, nor

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eſcape his perfect juſtice. The mention of this name, at the ſame time it reminds us of what God has done for us, ſhould remind us of what we ought, in obedience to him, to do for ourſelves; and then only can we properly call God our Father, when we ſincerely endeavour to approve ourſelves his children.

The next part of this divine prayer which comes under conſideration, preſents God to our minds as being in Heaven.

Theſe words, which art in Heaven, are not deſigned to limit or confine the divine nature, to ſay here it is, and there it is not, but to breed in us a due apprehenſion and eſteem of God's Majeſty.

In regard of his natural or eſſential preſence, he fills all his works, and is preſent with

with the whole creation; he knoweth our down-ſitting and our up-riſing, he underſtandeth our thoughts long before, he is about our path and about our bed, and ſpieth out all our ways; if we climb up into Heaven, he is there, if we go down to hell, he is there alſo; no time or place, no action, word, or thought, are ſo ſecret as to exclude him; the inmoſt receſſes of the heart lye open to his view, and by the neceſſary perfection of his nature he is intimately preſent with the minuteſt particle of his works.

In regard of his gracious preſence, God is ſaid to be preſent with good men, to dwell in their hearts, and to take up his reſidence with them that are of an humble and contrite ſpirit; in regard of this, he draws near to us when we do any thing to

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pleaſe him, and departs from us when we offend him.

In regard of his Majeſtick preſence, which we are to underſtand in the words under conſideration, he is ſaid to be in Heaven, becauſe he there affords brighter manifeſtations of his glory; he from thence iſſues out the decrees of his Providence, and lays open the purpoſe and deſign of his diſpenſations; he there ſhines forth in that fullneſs of majeſty, in that brightneſs of perfection, which we can but faintly imagine here, and the admiration of which will be part of our happy employment hereafter.

It remains for us to enquire, laſtly, For what purpoſes we are taught in our prayers to make mention of our Father's being in Heaven. Theſe are to breed in us a pro-

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by appearances; ſo that a well conducted hypocriſy may gain a child as great advantages from an earthly parent, as the moſt unfeigned ſincerity. But our Father which is in Heaven cannot be ſo deceived, for the Lord ſeeth not as man ſeeth; *man* looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

Our earthly parents are ſo unſtable in their affections, ſo weak in their underſtanding, ſo contracted in their abilities, ſo ſhort in their duration, that no certain dependance is to be had on them; but our Father which is in Heaven, is in his love and goodneſs fixt and immutable, in knowledge infinite, in power almighty, in duration eternal, ſo that on him, and him only we can place a ſolid and reaſonable confidence.

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There is nothing more proper than the conſideration of our Father's being in Heaven to wean our affections from this world, and make us gaſp after the next; it reminds us of the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of earthly things, where we have no continuing city, and that an inheritance is to be ſought by us in Heaven; for our Father is in Heaven, and where he is there ſhould we deſire to be alſo.

I ſhall conclude this diſcourſe with ſumming up the full ſenſe of the words we have been conſidering, according to the explication given of them, and which, by way of Paraphraſe, may run thus:

O, thou great and gracious Being, who haſt purchaſed to thyſelf the name of Father of all men and things by Creation and Preſervation, of all men in general by Redemption,

Redemption, and of all Chriſtians in particular by Regeneration and Adoption, who haſt all the perfections which an earthly parent can have in an infinite degree, and art entirely free from all their blemiſhes, who, in reſpect of the diffuſion of thy preſence art every where, in reſpect of the operations of thy grace doſt dwell in good men, and in reſpect of the manifeſtation of thy Majeſty art ſaid to be in Heaven, we come before Thee, as commanded by thy bleſſed Son, to petition for the relief of our wants, and the pardon of our ſins, bringing with us thoſe affections which the conſideration of a Father, and of a Father which is in Heaven, ought to breed in the breaſts of his children. When we conſider thy infinite Majeſty, Power, and Juſtice, we are ſtruck with the moſt pious humility, reverence, and fear, are actuated with the moſt firm reſolutions of obedience;

when we contemplate thy goodneſs, wiſdom, and knowledge, we feel the moſt exalted ſentiments of love and gratitude, ſubmiſſion and reſignation, confidence and ſincerity; when we reflect on thy example we are inſpired with an univerſal love and charity for all men; when we conſider that the Heavens are thy habitation, we look with indifference on things of this life, and deſire to enjoy complete happineſs with thee in Heaven; and in order to enſure ourſelves a place there, we make theſe affections the ruling principles of our lives and converſations; we always ſet thy example before our eyes, and make, as children ought, the imitation of our Father's perfections the chief ſtudy of our thoughts, the chief purport of our words, the chief buſineſs of our actions, the chief happineſs of our lives.

Now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

MATTHEW vi. 9th.

Hallowed be thy Name.

OUR Saviour having directed his diſciples to whom they were to offer their prayers, and by what name more eſpecially they ſhould approach him, proceeds to direct them likewiſe for what things they ſhould pray to him, and in what order their petitions ſhould be preſented, beginning with "Hallowed be thy Name." A petition which, as it naturally ariſes out of the words which went before, ſo doth it very properly precede and obtain the preference over all that follow after.

When we receive any great and material obligations from Man, when we are unexpectedly relieved from any great diſtreſs, or delivered from any impending danger, the firſt motion of the ſoul is all hurry and confuſion, a mixture of pain and pleaſure rather to be felt than deſcribed. But when theſe firſt tranſports are over, when Reaſon reſumes her ſeat, and Reflexion ſucceeds, the firſt enquiry of a grateful ſoul is this: I have received an obligation, how ſhall I return it? If that appears impoſſible, all that a generous benefactor will require, all that a grateful ſoul can do, and more than ſhe can ſometimes expreſs, is to acknowledge her obligations, and to ſay, I thank thee.

Thus it is between us and God: when we have thoroughly weighed and examined the great and material benefits conferred

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on us by God, and ſtrongly conveyed to our minds, by the name of Father, when we view him at once as creating us out of the duſt of the earth, as preſerving that being which he gave, and ſafely conducting us through all the ſtorms of life, as redeeming us from the claim of Hell, regenerating us by his bleſſed Spirit, and adopting us in his bleſſed Son, all is joy, all is wonder, expreſſing itſelf in the words of the Pſalmiſt, Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of man, that thou regardeſt him? Upon cooler recollection, gratitude induces us to think of making ſome return, and to cry out, What reward ſhall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits he hath done unto me? What reward ſhalt thou give unto him indeed! Thy intentions are good, but never to be executed. The mercies of God are as much above any returns of thine, as they

are above thy deſerts. Thy Wealth is Poverty, thy Power Weakneſs, and thy Wiſdom Folly in the ſight of God. Prudently then, and piouſly, content thyſelf with acknowledging his goodneſs, and ſetting his mercies ever before thine eyes, with ſaying, in the lively and grateful eloquence of the Pſalmiſt, Praiſe the Lord, O my ſoul, and all that is within me praiſe his holy name; Praiſe the Lord, O my ſoul, and forget not all his benefits; O God, our God, our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.

The order in which this petition ſtands doth very properly point out to us what all of us muſt know, and yet many of us are very apt, and too willing to forget, that the glory of God ought to be the great and chief purſuit of man. It is apparent, that whatſoever hath a right to our firſt conſi-

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deration in our prayers, ſhould have the ſame preference in our lives and converſations. Man may indeed, and too often doth divert and amuſe himſelf with vain and idle purſuits, with worſhipping idols of his own creation, and following phantoms which he himſelf hath formed, but he can have no ſolid and rational views, which have not a regard to, and do not ultimately terminate in, the glory of God; that moſt noble and lively principle, that moſt worthy and happy end of all his actions.

The deſign of God in the creation of the world was the glory of the Creator, and the good of the Creature; and then only doth the Creature attain to the utmoſt perfection of his nature, when both theſe ends are happily anſwered. But the misfortune is, that theſe things, which in the

deſign of the Deity, and in the nature of things, are ſtrictly and inſeparably connected and united, become divided by the folly and corruption of man, and are conſidered as incompatible, as two diſtinct and oppoſite purſuits, of which both are not attainable; and it is plain to be ſeen by the practice of the world, how much weight the glory of God will have with us, and how far it will influence our actions, when once it comes to be conſidered as inconſiſtent with, and oppoſite to, what we imagine to be our happineſs.

The greater part of mankind calling inclination reaſon, and corruption happineſs, direct their courſe to ſome diſtant goal, where imaginary happineſs takes up her abode; whilſt the wiſer and the happier few purſue the road which leads to the glory of God, and to the only true, ſolid, and

and laſting happineſs of man. Our wiſe Creator, well acquainted with the nature of the Creature which he had made, contrived to implant in us a principle more quick and powerful to advance his glory than gratitude itſelf, when he made the ſame means which conduced to his glory, neceſſary to our own happineſs; and that man who leads a religious and Chriſtian life, doth at the ſame time give glory to God, which is the one end of his creation, and procure happineſs to himſelf, which is the other.

Thus much obſerved in general, I proceed more particularly, to conſider the petition before us, and ſhall ſhew,

Firſt, What we are to underſtand by God's Name. And,

Secondly,

Secondly, How we are to Hallow it.

By the Name of God we are to underſtand, in the firſt and moſt important ſenſe of the word, his all-perfect nature. Names are impoſed on things to diſtinguiſh them from each other, by conveying to us as clear an apprehenſion as poſſible of their nature. But God is a Being ſo infinitely tranſcendent above all other, that no one name can give us any adequate conception of him, and the whole force of words is inſufficient to ſet before us God in that fullneſs of glory which dwells eſſentially in him. To raiſe our thoughts, however, as near as poſſible to the Deity, he is in Scripture ſet forth to us under ſeveral titles, expreſſive of the ſeveral ways in which his all-perfect nature diſplays itſelf to man. Could any one word convey to us a proper notion of God's nature, that would be his

name;

name; but as this is impoſſible, we muſt by his name neceſſarily underſtand whatever perfections we know to be eſſential to him, whether manifeſted in his works, or revealed to us in his word, under how many different titles ſoever.

By the name of God in a ſecondary ſenſe, we are to underſtand whatever hath an immediate relation to him; as the times and places ſet apart for his ſervice, thoſe holy writings in which are contained the revelations of his will; the perſons appointed to miniſter in his ſervice, and the revenues allotted for their maintenance.

To hallow the name of God, in which ſoever of theſe ſenſes we take it, cannot ſignify to confer any holineſs upon it. In holineſs, as in his other adorable perfections, God is infinite; nor is it in our power

power to diminiſh therefrom, or make any addition thereto; and thoſe things which bear ſome peculiar relation to God, are holy merely upon that account, and not according to the opinion which men may have, or the uſes they may make of them. It is not therefore for his own ſake, or any advantage, any freſh increaſe of glory and holineſs accruing thereby to *him*, that God hath made the hallowing his name our duty, but for a proof of our love, gratitude, and obedience, and as a neceſſary qualification to prepare us for being ſubjects of his kingdom. When therefore, we entertain high and worthy notions of God's nature; when we acknowledge his infinite perfections, and act agreeably to ſuch acknowledgments, viewing and adoring at a diſtance his natural attributes, approaching to and imitating his moral, when we keep our mouths from profane curſing and

ſwearing,

ſwearing, and never mention the name of the high and holy One but with awe and reverence, piety and devotion; when we make God's glory the firſt principle, the chief end of all our thoughts, words, and actions, and let the deſire of hallowing his holy name ſtand foremoſt in our hearts, as it doth in the petitions of this prayer, then do we hallow as we ought the name of God, as it ſignifies his nature.

When we eſteem thoſe things which bear any relation to God according to the dignity of him to whom they belong, and apply them to the purpoſes for which they were deſigned, when we rightly conſider them as appointed by God to receive part of that reverence which we owe to him, and which he looks upon as paid to himſelf, when we hallow the times and places ſet apart for his ſervice by a conſtant attendance

tendance and devout behaviour; the Scriptures, by defending them on all occaſions againſt the cavils and objections of infidels or evil-minded brethren, by eſteeming them the word of God containing all things neceſſary to ſalvation, by diligently and devoutly reading and meditating on them, and by giving them all honour in our converſation, forbearing to make a jeſt of them, which is the practice of unbelievers, or to take a jeſt out of them, which is the practice of many who gratify what they call wit at the expence of decency and religion, when we hallow the perſons appointed to miniſter in his ſervice by a proper regard of their function, a due attention to their inſtructions, and a practical obſervance of them, and their revenues by a cheerful and punctual payment of them whenever they are due, we do then hallow as we ought

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the name of God, according to the ſecondary explication here given of it.

Was it in our power to make any addition to the Holineſs of God's Nature, or to add to his eſſential Glory in any reſpect whatſoever, certainly in point of gratitude we ought to do it, nay ſhould be exceeding glad that we are able to make ſome return for the mercies we have received at his hands. As there is no pleaſure which is more ſincere, no virtue which conveys greater delight along with it than the returning of obligations, unleſs it is the conferring them, what a delightful piece of ſervice muſt it be to a generous ſoul to indulge her gratitude to God, and in ſome meaſure acquit herſelf of her obligations, by hallowing his name. The ſatisfaction ariſing herefrom would be cheaply bought, though the performance was laborious

laborious and difficult; and the delight reſulting from the action, when accompliſhed, would amply overpay all the labour undergone in the accompliſhment of it.

Suppoſing then, that to hallow God's name was a laborious taſk, whereas it is moſt eaſy and pleaſant, and that it was profitable to God, but not in the leaſt to ourſelves, gratitude ſhould even then be ſufficient to induce us to perform it. Our ſincere hallowing of God's name doth not render him one whit more holy, who is in himſelf holy above all that is called holy; doth not render him in the leaſt more glorious, who is in himſelf great above all glory; our becoming faithful ſubjects of his kingdom doth not at all encreaſe his dominion, who in the right of his own eſſential perfections ruleth over all; nor our zealous

performance

performance of, and ſubmiſſion to, his will, make any addition to his authority who doeth whatſoever he will in Heaven and in earth. It is for our own ſakes therefore that we are taught thus to pray, and required thus to act; that by ſo doing we may render ourſelves proper objects of God's goodneſs, and partake of the bleſſed effects of his beneficence.

Notwithſtanding all this, how few are there, if we look into the world, who are worthy repeaters of this petition, who hallow the name of God as they ought. Some, and thoſe not a few in this right honourable age of infidelity, wholly deny the Being of a God; others allow him indeed a bare exiſtence, but impiouſly ſtrip him of his attributes, and deny his Providence; whilſt many who profeſs the Chriſtian faith, and call themſelves the

children of God, diſhonour him by their wicked and profligate life, and bring into contempt, and cauſe to be evil ſpoken of, that holy name whereby they are called.

Never did greater levity appear than in the preſent age. All things ſerious, ſolemn, and ſacred are wantonly thrown by, or treated only as proper ſubjects of ridicule; and the religion of Chriſt, which ought to warm the hearts and influence the practice of its profeſſors, is no more than ſkin-deep; it is made a plauſible pretence to ſerve a turn, and is put off and on as eaſily as our cloaths. How thin is the church, how almoſt deſolate is the altar of God? What wonder? ſince a party of pleaſure, the dropping in of a friend, a too luxurious meal, and indolence of diſpoſition, in a word, any thing or nothing, is deemed a ſufficient excuſe for our ſtaying from church,

church, and neglecting the publick worſhip of our Maker.

The Scriptures, thoſe lively oracles of God, wherein is contained our title to eternal ſalvation, which it is every man's duty and happineſs to be acquainted with, how ſhamefully, how fooliſhly, how impiouſly, are they neglected? I doubt, though I am afraid it doth not admit of a doubt, whether any book is ſo little known as that which deſerves and demands our ſtricteſt attention. The Poor think themſelves abſolved from conſulting it becauſe ſo much of their time is taken up by their neceſſary labour; and the Rich no doubt muſt be excuſed, ſome becauſe they never read at all, and others becauſe their meditations are turned another way, and they are better employed in peruſing and raiſing trophies to more modern Productions, where inde-

cency paſſes off for wit, and infidelity for reaſon.

Anſwerable to and worthy of theſe moſt excellent private ſtudies, is the polite Converſation of the preſent age, where Noiſe is Mirth, Obſcenity Good-humour, and Profaneneſs Wit. Decency and Good ſenſe, which were formerly deemed neceſſary to give a grace to and ſeaſon Converſation, to join Pleaſure and Improvement together, are become mere antiquated notions, words without meaning; and all that the pert and polite ſinner need to do now to eſtabliſh his reputation of wit, and be deemed the hero of all polite Aſſemblies, is to get rid of Religion as ſoon as poſſible, to ſet Conſcience at defiance, to deny the Being or Providence of God, to laugh at the Scriptures, deride God's Ordinances, profane his name, and rally his Miniſtry. Thus qualified,

qualified, the world is his own, he carries all before him, and if he ſhould meet with oppoſition from ſome ſincere Chriſtian who is truly Religious, and cannot brook to hear the name of his Maker treated with contempt, why he deſpiſes and derides the poor ſuperſtitious Fool, and ſuperlatively happy in himſelf laughs at the Argument which he cannot anſwer.

Much were it to be wiſhed that the Character here drawn was imaginary, or at leaſt uncommon, but I am afraid the experience of all preſent will aſſure them it is too real, too frequent.

I ſhall diſmiſs my Conſideration of this petition by ſeriouſly exhorting every Good Chriſtian to extend his regards to his fellow-creatures, to endeavour to propagate a due veneration of God's holy Name, not

only by the goodneſs of his life, and the ſincerity of his Prayers, but alſo by giving his advice, and exerting his authority. It is naturally implied in the words of this petition, that we hallow God's name ourſelves, and promote it in others, as much as lies in our power; and if we are deficient as to ourſelves, or negligent as to others, every time we repeat this petition, we incur the cenſure and puniſhment due to hypocriſy.

There are it is to be feared, many well-meaning and ſincere Chriſtians, who thro' fear of laughter, imputation of ſingularity, and cenſure of hypocriſy, forbear to rebuke and expreſs their diſlike to thoſe many ways, by which God's name is diſhonoured in moſt converſations. But ſurely if it is becoming, if it is the duty of a man to vindicate the character of his friend, ſtill more becoming,

ſtill

ſtill more the duty muſt it be of every Chriſtian to defend the honour of his God; eſpecially as thoſe who profane it will be apt to conſtrue ſilence into approbation, and think thoſe ſecretly for them, who are not openly againſt them. Now that religion is at ſo low an ebb, every diſciple of Chriſt, who hath at heart the honour of his Maſter, ought to diſplay the banners of Chriſtianity abroad, to declare open war againſt wickedneſs and vice, to conſider himſelf as accountable to God for his backwardneſs in rebuking his profeſt enemies, and to look upon himſelf as a light which is to give light to all that are in the houſe, and in conſequence of ſuch conſiderations, to let his light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee his good works, and glorify his Father which is in Heaven.

Now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON

SERMON V.

MATTHEW vi. 10th.

Thy Kingdom come.

WERE we but once thoroughly convinced of the exiſtence of a God, and of the great benefits which we have received at his hands, did we but conſider, know, and acknowledge him to be our Father which is in Heaven, and ſuffer ſuch conſiderations to have their due weight and proper effect upon us, to incline us to reverence his name, and render it holy and reſpectable among men, the next ſtep would be our repeating as we ought, this petition.

Thy

Thy Kingdom come. The great and material advantages of being under the immediate inſpection and government of an all-wiſe, powerful, juſt and gracious King, are ſo evident, that nothing but a degenerate and corrupted nature, nothing but a partial underſtanding blindly ſubmitting to the irregular dictates of a perverſe will could prevent our ſeeing, acknowledging, purſuing, and praying for them. Moſt men, however, thus biaſſed from their natural rectitude, ſet up the throne of extravagant paſſions in their hearts, inſtead of chearfully and joyfully ſubmitting to the ſcepter of God; like the rebellious Jews, crying out for a King, when indeed the Lord their God was their King.

As this ariſes in a great meaſure from a total ignorance of the nature of the Kingdom here prayed for, I ſhall ſhew what we

we are to underſtand here by the Kingdom of God, and what we mean by the coming of that Kingdom; concluding with mentioning thoſe affections with which this petition ought always to be attended.

The Kingdom of God in Scripture is taken in ſeveral ſenſes. Sometimes it means his natural or providential Kingdom, or that univerſal dominion which he exerciſes over all things, and which is the neceſſary reſult of his all-perfect nature.

In this ſenſe holy David declares, thine, O Lord, is the greatneſs, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majeſty; for all that is in the Heaven, and in the Earth, is thine; thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.

Sometimes

Sometimes it means the Kingdom of grace, or the diſpenſation of the Meſſiah.

This is called the Kingdom of God, becauſe though he doth not ſet up an outward and viſible government, as in the Moſaick diſpenſation, yet he rules inwardly in the hearts and minds of thoſe who are entered into the Goſpel Covenant. This is the moſt common acceptation of the phraſe in the New Teſtament. But it ſometimes ſignifies alſo the Kingdom of God's Glory, or that happy ſtate into which at the day of Judgment, he ſhall receive, and in which he ſhall govern his ſaints for ever.

Of this Kingdom our Saviour ſpeaks, ſaying, then ſhall the King ſay unto them on his right hand, Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.

Having

Having thus ſeen in what general acceptations the Kingdom of God is taken in Scripture, let us next conſider in which of theſe it is to be underſtood in this petition.

As to the providential Kingdom of God, it is founded upon the perfection of his nature; and as that perfection is unalterably the ſame, ſo muſt the dominion reſulting from it be unalterable likewiſe, capable neither of addition or diminution; and therefore we cannot here have any reſpect to that kingdom.

The kingdom of Grace is capable of increaſe, both by the coming in of thoſe who do not now believe, and by ſuch a bleſſed alteration in thoſe who do, that they may walk according to their profeſſion.

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The kingdom of Glory is capable of increaſe; both by receiving thoſe who do now, and ſhall hereafter lead a godly life in the ſtate of grace, and by admitting thoſe who are already departed out of this life in the fear of God, to a greater ſhare of Glory, than they at preſent enjoy. In this petition therefore we have regard to theſe two kingdoms of grace and glory.

Though the kingdom of Grace is in fact but an introduction to that of Glory, and the kingdom of Glory the higheſt diſpenſation of God's grace, yet are they in ſome things different both as to the manner of the adminiſtration, and the condition of the ſubjects.

In the kingdom of Grace we are in a ſtate of tryal, liable to be drawn away by the deceit of the world, the fleſh, and the Devil,

Devil, liable to pain and ſorrow, to the fears of loſing what few comforts we enjoy, and to the troubleſome certainty of leaving them if they leave not us; in the kingdom of Glory we are in a ſtate of ſecure and perfect felicity, our crown is fixt upon our heads too firm to be ſhaken, the flowers which bloom therein ſhall always continue freſh; Sin ſhall be diſarmed of her ſting, and Death be ſwallowed up in Victory.

In the kingdom of Grace, the good and the bad are mixed together, rewards and puniſhments are unequally diſtributed, and the worldly condition of the greateſt ſinner is preferable to that of the moſt righteous man on earth; but in the kingdom of Glory the good ſhall be ſeparated from the bad; thoſe who have been faithful ſervants of their Lord ſhall be diſtinguiſhed from

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the wicked and rebellious; the glorified Saint ſhall no longer be the companion of the incorrigible Sinner; the latter ſhall be aſſigned over to everlaſting puniſhment, and the former received into that glorious kingdom wherein is joy and peace for evermore.

In the kingdom of Grace, we walk by Faith, we ſee through a glaſs darkly, our underſtanding is clouded, our reaſon weak, and our will perverſe; we are ſcarce able to comprehend the moſt obvious things, and the ways of God, and the diſpenſations of his Providence, are far above out of our ſight; but in the kingdom of Glory we ſhall ſee face to face, we ſhall know even as we are known, all nature will be laid open to our view, and the God of Nature himſelf be fully manifeſted to us. The ways of Providence, which in many reſpects

ſpects appear to us dark, myſterious, and unintelligible, ſhall be then cleared up, the cloud which ſits upon them at preſent will be totally diſpelled, and they will appear to us juſt and uniform, worthy of the fountain of light from whence they iſſued. The Nature of God, which in our preſent ſtate we can have no adequate notion of, will then break forth upon us in its fulleſt tide of Glory, and theſe weak and frail bodies will be ſo much ſtrengthned as to be able to ſee God and live; and our ſouls be ſo far exalted above their preſent ſtate in knowledge, as to be able fully to comprehend, in purity, as to be able perfectly to enjoy the glorious object.

In the kingdom of Grace, upon account of our many ſins, and the utter impoſſibility of our making peace with God of ourſelves, we are governed by our Mediator

Jeſus

Jeſus Chriſt; through the conſideration of whoſe meritorious ſufferings and effectual interceſſion, God overlooks our frailties, pardons our ſins, and accepts of a ſincere repentance inſtead of a perfect obedience. But in the kingdom of Glory, when we ſhall no more be liable to temptation and ſin, when our corruptible ſhall have put on incorruption, and we bear the image of the heavenly, as we have borne the image of the earthly, there will be no occaſion for a mediator, but we ſhall be governed immediately by God himſelf; the mediatorial office of Chriſt ſhall then ceaſe, and the kingdom be delivered up to God even the Father, and the Son alſo himſelf ſhall be ſubject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

It remains for us to conſider, in what ſenſe we pray that theſe kingdoms of God may come.

Monarch. We ought alſo, in uſing this petition, to have an univerſal love and charity for all men, a due ſenſe of the corruption of manners, of the prevalence of infidelity and vice, an holy ſorrow for all who knowing the truth live not up to it, and for all who know it not, but walk in ignorance and in the ſhadow of death. And theſe charitable affections ſhould upon all occaſions break forth into action, inſpiring us with a ſincere zeal to inſtruct the ignorant and reclaim the wicked.

A glorious employment this for a reaſonable creature, and a neceſſary qualification to make us true ſubjects of that kingdom which was founded and is governed by Chriſt, who ſpent his whole life in doing good, in converting the Sinner from the evil of his ways, and bringing him to the knowledge of God. Chriſtianity was never intended

intended to be kept in a corner, or confined, like the doctrines of the philoſophers, to any particular ſchool, but to ſpread itſelf over the face of the whole earth. No one therefore can be a worthy ſubject of Chriſt's kingdom, who does not endeavour to advance and propagate it.

It is not to be expected that we ſhould, like the Apoſtles, viſit remote and barbarous nations, ſince we have not, as they had, the credentials of Miracles to produce; but ſurely it is our indiſpenſible duty to plant and propagate the Chriſtian religion in our own colonies, and as we reap their temporal things, to which we have I know not what right, to ſow in them ſpiritual things, to which our religion entitles them, without any other conſideration. Had we been more careful to perform our parts in this reſpect, had we

endeavoured to civilize thoſe rude nations, and inſtil into them the principles of the Goſpel, we had not ſo often lamented their virulent cruelty and repeated perfidies Of late years indeed there has been eſtabliſhed among us a moſt excellent charity for propagating the Goſpel into foreign parts, and if the ſucceſs has not as yet anſwered our wiſhes, it has been ſufficient to quicken our endeavours.

It is evident from Scripture, that before the conſummation of all things Chriſt's kingdom ſhall be univerſal, that the earth ſhall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the ſea, that the kingdom ſhall be the Lord's, and he ſhall govern the nations. It is our duty therefore to advance and haſten, to the utmoſt of our power, this happy æra, by approving ourſelves true ſubjects of Chriſt, and ſtriving

ing to erect his throne in the hearts of others; by endeavouring ourselves to promote Christian knowledge at home, and encouraging those who strive to propagate it abroad, administring such means to them as may render their labours easy, and pave the way for their success, so that the word of God, and the kingdom of his Christ, may grow mightily and prevail.

It is our interest, as well as duty, to pray for the coming of Christ's kingdom, both in regard of the happy consequences attending his universal dominion in the state of Grace, and our speedier admission into that of Glory. Universal Happiness must be the result of universal Christianity, and the world shall enjoy uninterrupted peace, when that religion which forbids all the motives to war, is sincerely professed by all; the wolf shall dwell with

the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child ſhall lead them. All racking and malevolent paſſions ſhall then be extinguiſhed, all baſe and diſhoneſt actions ſhall then ceaſe, and true religion ſhall ſanctify the hearts, preſide over the actions, and bleſs the lives of all men.

Thus univerſally happy, thus univerſally good ſhall the ſtate of Grace be, when the fullneſs of the Gentiles come in, and the remnant of Iſrael is gathered together; and as the time of this great reformation is uncertain, as it may be even now at our doors, how much is it our duty, how much is it our intereſt to contribute every one of us his mite towards the haſtening of this happy period:

And

And do thou, O God, who ſeeſt how low religion is ſunk, both in our minds and practice, be pleaſed to impart to us and to all people, ſuch portions of thy grace as may purify our hearts, and amend our lives; as my incite us to the converſion of others, as well as the reformation of ourſelves; quicken our endeavours to this good work, aſſiſt our infirmities, and in thy good time crown us with ſucceſs, and bring all mankind under the dominion of thy bleſſed ſon; and when this happy time is arrived, then be thou pleaſed, of thy gracious goodneſs, ſhortly to accompliſh the number of thine elect, and to haſten thy kingdom of Glory, that we, with all thoſe that are departed in the true faith of thy holy name, may have our perfect conſummation and bliſs, both in body and ſoul, in thy eternal and everlaſting glory, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord; to whom,

whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, &c. &c.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

MATTHEW vi. 10th.

Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven.

THIS is the laſt of thoſe petitions which relate immediately to God, and is the beſt proof we can give of our being ſincere in the foregoing.

The will of God may be underſtood either of thoſe laws which he has given us for the direction of our lives, or of thoſe diſpenſations which in the courſe of them he is pleaſed to lay on us.

In

In the firſt of theſe ſenſes our ſincere Obedience, in the laſt our chearful Submiſſion is required. Both theſe duties I ſhall conſider in my preſent diſcourſe, ſubjoining ſuch conſiderations as are proper to enforce them.

And firſt, Of obedience to the will of God, as it means the obſervation of thoſe laws which he has given us for the direction of our lives.

Theſe laws are contained in the holy ſcriptures; and as it is neceſſary that we ſhould know the good, perfect, and acceptable will of God, before it is poſſible that we can do it, it is our duty to make ourſelves thoroughly acquainted with theſe books, that we may have a competent knowledge of thoſe laws which are to be the ſtandard of all our actions. In order

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to acquire this, we ſhould be diligent in reading them ourſelves, and attentive to ſuch expoſitions as are delivered by others, for the more full and clearer illuſtration of them. Half the time which many of us beſtow upon reading Novels and Romances, would make us maſters of thoſe books wherein is contained our title to eternal ſalvation.

One would imagine that a church like our's, wherein the Scriptures are publickly read in the vulgar tongue, and the duty of private reading and meditating on them is recommended, would abound with knowledge and underſtanding, even amongſt her poorer members; whereas on the contrary, many, even in conſiderable ſtations, are ſo groſsly ignorant of them as can ſcarce be credited. For the knowledge of God's laws is not only eaſy to be acquired, but

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it is abſolutely neceſſary for us to be acquainted with them, as without knowing we cannot obey them, without obeying them we cannot obtain everlaſting ſalvation. Let every perſon therefore make it his buſineſs to ſearch the Scriptures, to breed up his children in the knowledge of them, and to let their ſtudies of things divine go hand in hand with their purſuits after human knowledge; ſo that we may every one of us attentively hear, conſtantly read, ſeriouſly mark, piouſly learn, and profitably digeſt thoſe laws which God hath given us for the direction of our lives. The next thing to which is, that we act agreeably to that knowledge; if we know the will of God, happy are we if we do it.

The Obedience of the Angels is propoſed to us by Chriſt as a pattern for our own, thy

thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven. Not that our bleſſed Lord, who knew the diſparity between them and us, and the many diſadvantages which we labour under, that they are totally exempted from, demands from us that perfect performance of his will which they pay to him, and which we in our preſent ſtate are incapable of diſcharging. Great is the diſproportion between a glorified Spirit, free from the clog of fleſh, free from all temptations, bleſt with an unſullied clearneſs and rectitude of will, and a poor mortal creature, incumbered with a load of matter, ſurrounded with temptations, corrupt in his very nature, weak in his underſtanding, and in his will perverſe. Great therefore muſt be the diſproportion in the ſervices which they pay to their Creator, in the purity and perfection of their obedience. But though we cannot equal theſe celeſtial

beings,

beings, we may imitate them; though we cannot arrive at the excellency of their natures, we may by aiming at it arrive at the ſummit of our own. Sincerity and Univerſality, Zeal and Alacrity, Diligence and Perſeverance, conſpicuous and inſeparable qualifications of their Obedience, may become ingredients of our own, though not in the ſame perfect degree; and every virtue which they in the excellency of the Angelick nature poſſeſs unſullied, we in the infirmities of the human may imperfectly imitate; and imitation is the thing propoſed here, a practiſing of the ſame virtues, though not in the ſame degree. A perfect and unſinning Obedience is not required of us, but a ſincere and univerſal one is; which if we perform, the many acts of diſobedience which we commit through ſurprize, ignorance, and infirmity, nay, through wilfulneſs itſelf, will upon a

ſincere

ſincere repentance be graciouſly pardoned by God, for his ſake who died for all men, and lives to make interceſſion for all thoſe who do their beſt to approve themſelves his diſciples.

Having thus ſeen in what latitude our Obedience is expected, and in what manner God's will may be done in earth as it is in Heaven, I ſhall now endeavour to enforce the practice of this Obedience to God's laws by ſome ſuitable conſiderations. The firſt of which is,

That, He, who made and delivered them to us, is a Being who has an indiſputable authority to appoint laws, and infinite power to puniſh thoſe who violate them. The beſt rules of action, unleſs enacted and enforced by proper authority, are weak and uſeleſs, inſufficient to repreſs

vice, and maintain virtue. Look into the ſchools of the antient philoſophers, and you will find that their many excellent natural precepts were confined within very narrow limits, and had little or no influence, being generally more admired than practiſed, even by their own ſcholars. Reaſon was and ever will be too weak to combat with inclination, and Virtue, left to herſelf, unable to make a ſtand againſt the corruptions of Vice. No law therefore can be expected to be duly obſerved, without an evident right of making it, a manifeſt ability of puniſhing thoſe who break it, veſted in the law-giver. Both of which moſt eminently concur in God; his right of giving laws to the Creatures whom he made is unqueſtionable, his power of puniſhing the diſobedient is a neceſſary perfection of his nature; he is wiſe in heart, and mighty in ſtrength; who hath

hardened

hardened himſelf againſt him and proſpered? And his intention to puniſh them, as it might be fully proved from that perfect Juſtice which is eſſential to him, Righteouſneſs and Judgment are the habitation of his throne, ſo is it very plainly revealed in the ſame books wherein his laws are contained, that he will puniſh the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity. All the motives therefore which ſerve to enforce our obedience to the laws of man, do moſt ſtrongly conſpire to bind on us Obedience to the laws of God.

Another motive to which duty is Gratitude, ariſing from a conſideration of that perſon by whoſe mediation God gave theſe laws to us, namely, Jeſus Chriſt. If we reflect ſeriouſly on the miſerable condition from which Chriſt relieved us, and

with reaſon, but with themſelves, liable to be miſconſtrued, perverted, and abuſed; and the moſt equitable of them are in a ſtate of uncertainty, and ſubject to be repealed; but the laws of the Goſpel are free from all theſe imperfections; they are delivered in a clear, conciſe, and perſpicuous manner, and as they were deſigned for the direction of the ignorant, as well as of the learned, they lie level to the meaneſt capacities, they are perfectly uniform, conſiſtent, and harmonious, and the comments occaſionally made on them by the Apoſtles ſerve to reflect fuller light on them, and render the moſt difficult paſſages plain and eaſy; they are light itſelf, and in them is no darkneſs at all.

They are alſo fixt and immutable, liable to no change, ſubject to no repeal. The varying of circumſtances, the fallibility, ſhort-

ſhortſightedneſs, and want of integrity in human lawgivers, make it oftentimes neceſſary to vary their laws, but as God is free from all theſe blemiſhes, as there is in him no variableneſs nor ſhadow of turning, ſo in the Goſpel laws which he has eſtabliſhed, there are no miſtakes, no infirmities to require an alteration; they are a full, perfect, and perpetual ſtandard of all our actions, to which all nations ſhould bow and obey.

To theſe excellencies let us alſo join the ſublimity and uſefulneſs of theſe laws. In three ſhort chapters of the New Teſtament are contained more noble and ſublime doctrines, than the whole body of heathen philoſophy can ſupply us with; upon firſt ſight indeed they appear ſo eaſy and familiar, that we may be induced to think,

that we ourſelves could have been the authors of them; but upon enquiry we ſhall find, that the moſt acute and diligent ſpirits among the antients, after a whole life ſpent in the ſtudy of virtue, could, with all the advantages of human literature, produce nothing which deſerved to be put in the ſcale againſt Chriſtianity.

Philoſophy, indeed, whatever figure it might make before Chriſt appeared in the world, and his laws were promulged, did upon that promulgation very ſenſibly decline, and muſt have entirely dropped to the ground long before it did, had not ſome profeſſors of it, more artful than honeſt, tranſplanted many of the Chriſtian precepts into their ſyſtems, and embelliſhed them with virtues not their own.

To the foregoing motives to Obedience to the Goſpel laws, let us laſtly add, the uſefulneſs of them.

They are calculated to promote at the ſame time our virtue and happineſs, to make us at once better and happier men. They have a natural tendency to promote peace on earth and good will among men, as well as to advance the glory of God on high; they do not only pave our way to Heaven, but if religiouſly obeyed, will make our life here an Heaven upon earth.

On the whole, the Goſpel laws are reaſonable and juſt, clear and conciſe, conſiſtent and uniform, fixt and immutable, ſublime and uſeful; they are given by that God to whom our ſervice is due, through the mediation of that Saviour to whom we have the greateſt obligations, ſo that in point

point of duty and reaſon, gratitude and intereſt, we are bound to perform a chearful, ready, and univerſal Obedience to the will of God, as it is manifeſted in thoſe laws contained in the Goſpel of his ſon. Notwithſtanding which potent ties, we find it extremely difficult, and without the aſſiſtance of God's grace impoſſible, to keep ourſelves from falling; and therefore we are taught by our Saviour to pray to God that his will may be done in earth as in Heaven, to make us ſenſible that without his grace we cannot ſo perform it, and even with it, in many things we offend all. How thankful therefore ſhould we be to God, who has appointed a remedy for our weakneſs, and how joyful ſhould we be to apply it, making up for the imperfection of our Obedience, by the ſincerity of our Repentance. Such a courſe will not only greatly redound to our temporal peace, but

is alſo the only means, through Chriſt's blood, to entitle us to eternal glory; and the only way to become ſharers of the happineſs of Angels in Heaven, is to be ſincere though imperfect imitators of their Obedience in earth.

I proceed now to conſider the other duty included in doing God's will, namely, a patient and chearful ſubmiſſion to whatever diſpenſations God is pleaſed, in the courſe of our lives, to lay upon us.

It is not in our power indeed to diſappoint God's deſigns and reverſe his decrees, but it is in our power, and too often in our practice, to murmur and repine at them. By Submiſſion therefore we are to underſtand that virtue which enables us to appear, in all ſtations and under all circumſtances, with an equal and reſigned temper,

per, ariſing from a full conviction that whatever happens unto us is according to God's appointment, and that whatever he appoints is always beſt. This is the only ſolid foundation upon which our Submiſſion can be built; and Submiſſion is that duty which of all others conduces to our eaſe and quiet, which conducts us with a ſteady courſe through all the ſtorms of life, which ſoftens every ſorrow, aſſwages every pain, and blunts the edge of the moſt ſevere misfortunes.

When we reflect on the ſufferings of human nature in general, and thoſe which we ourſelves groan under in particular, the unequal diſtribution of them, ſo that the lives of ſome men glide on in ſerenity and peace, whilſt others know nothing but misfortunes from the cradle to the grave, and that oftentimes the righteous ſuffer,

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and the wicked proſper, upon ſuch reflections we are often tempted to call in queſtion the Juſtice of God, and cavil at his diſpenſations; actuated by a principle of ſelf-approbation, we are readier to condemn any thing than ourſelves, to impute our ſufferings to any rather than the true cauſe, to clear ourſelves, and accuſe God. A practice this as unreaſonable as impious, greatly prejudicial to our own intereſts, and injurious to his honour; inſtead of removing it augments our ſufferings, increaſes God's diſpleaſure, and inſpires all thoſe uneaſy paſſions, and produces thoſe diſhoneſt actions, which are the general conſequences of a diſcontented mind. Submiſſion on the contrary, ſuch a Submiſſion as giveth thanks in all things, has not only a tendency in itſelf to alleviate our griefs, but alſo to prevail on God to remove them.

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However dark and myſterious, unintelligible and inconſiſtent the ways of Providence may appear, this patient and reſigned temper receives and ſuffers all things without repining; and is firmly perſuaded, that in a future ſtate all which ſeems dark and myſterious in God's government ſhall be cleared up, all that ſeems unintelligible ſhall be thoroughly explained, and all which ſeems inconſiſtent ſhall be fully reconciled; ſo that however we may repine at our ſufferings here, we ſhall ſee the juſtice and good tendency of them hereafter. It is indeed impoſſible for us to ſuffer and not to feel, what is required of us is to feel like men, and bear like Chriſtians; neither are our endeavours to extricate ourſelves, or our prayers that God would deliver us, any ways oppoſite to this duty, but are themſelves duties which ought always to accompany our ſufferings as we are reaſonable

able creatures, and as we are Chriſtians; only let us uſe no endeavours but ſuch as are ſtrictly juſt, no prayers but what are offered up with that reſignation of which Chriſt has ſet us an example; we may beſeech God, that the cup may paſs from us, but always with this concluſion, not my will, O Lord, but thy will be done. This is a temper which every man ought always to carry about with him, and yet it is a point in which the very beſt of us are apt to fall ſhort; I ſhall therefore conclude this diſcourſe with ſubjoining ſome of the many motives which might be offered for the enforcement of this duty.

Firſt, let us conſider the perſon who brings theſe ſufferings upon us; it is God; a Being of whoſe nature we can have no true notion, without acknowledging him endued

endued with Almighty Power, perfect Goodneſs, and conſummate Wiſdom.

In conſequence of the firſt of theſe attributes he rules and governs all things, brings to paſs whatſoever he ſees fit, and ſuffers no oppoſition nor controul, he is mighty in ſtrength, who hath hardened himſelf againſt him and proſpered? And if God, who brings theſe ſufferings upon us, is of ſuch infinite power, how imprudent is it in us to murmur and repine at what we can no ways prevent, how unſafe to provoke a power, which we are utterly incapable of reſiſting? This argument, however ſtrong when applied to our weakneſs and neceſſity is, it muſt be confeſt, but little calculated to engage and work upon the heart; it demands our ſubmiſſion through fear, but not through love;

love; it does not at all induce us to kiſs the rod, and bleſs the hand which gives the blow. To the perfect goodneſs of God we muſt have recourſe, before we can be thoroughly reconciled to, and ſatisfied with, our ſufferings; we may ſee the neceſſity of them from his power, but are convinced of the uſefulneſs and advantage of them by his goodneſs only. It is this attribute which gives us patience, reſignation, and love, for it is this which teaches us that God cannot take delight in the miſeries of his creatures, that he does not grieve us willingly, but in mercy, and that his diſpenſations, however ſevere they may fall, are indeed the reſult of an Almighty Power, but of an Almighty Power acting according to the dictates of perfect goodneſs, and under the direction of unerring wiſdom. God is of infinite knowledge and wiſdom, he perfectly underſtands the

nature of all things, with their qualities, powers, and circumſtances; he thoroughly comprehends the reſpects and relations of things one to another, the fitneſs of ſuch and ſuch means to produce ſuch and ſuch ends, and therefore, as his goodneſs always inclines and his power always enables him to act for the good of his creatures, ſo his wiſdom ſecures him from any error and miſapplication.

Theſe conſiderations muſt naturally tend to ſuppreſs our complaints and confirm our patience; for as God is of infinite wiſdom, goodneſs, and power, nothing can cloud his underſtanding, nothing can pervert or reſiſt his will; and therefore in this we may reſt ſatisfied, that God always knows what is for our good, and is always willing and able to afford it to us; and

therefore

therefore we may with the greateſt ſecurity repoſe ourſelves in him.

Another motive to ſubmiſſion ariſes from a conſideration of ourſelves.

We are God's creatures, and ought to be very thankful, that we are at all, and not to murmur that we are in no better condition. Shall the lump of Clay ſay to the Potter who faſhioned it, why haſt thon made me thus or thus? Our condition here was not deſigned to be completely happy, but to be intermixed with trayals, and troubles; we are in a ſtate of probation, not of felicity. Sufferings are the neceſſary lot of our nature; Our Saviour was made perfect by them; and as we ought to follow him in other reſpects, ſo muſt we expect to follow him in this alſo. Why ſhould we repine then at the com-

mon burthen of our nature, why murmur at the juſt and ſalutary diſpenſations of Providence? eſpecially conſidering that we are ſinners, and as ſuch, the very leaſt of God's mercies is more than we deſerve, the very ſevereſt of his inflictions is milder than our crimes in ſtrict juſtice demand; why then doth a living man complain, a man for the puniſhment of his ſins?

Laſtly, let us conſider the nature of the ſufferings themſelves.

Great part of thoſe afflictions which we place to God's account, ought in good reaſon to be placed to our own. How many are poor through extravagance or indolence, how many ſick through debauchery and intemperance; and ſo with many other afflictions, which being withdrawn from thoſe miſeries we ſo much complain of,

would

would reduce them more than at firſt view we could believe; and for thoſe which remained, they would not appear ſo terrible as at preſent, if we would place the good which we undeſervedly enjoy, againſt the ills which we deſervedly feel; if we would conſider how many perſons were in a worſe ſtate, rather than caſt up our eyes to thoſe who are in a better; if we would reflect on the quick and ſudden tranſitions which we ſee from affliction to comfort, even in thoſe who ſeem the fartheſt gone in miſery; and that even in the midſt of our ſufferings we may have the ſtrong conſolation of hope; we may bear the preſent in expectation of the future, and not unreaſonably believe, that as we ebb with the one tide, we ſhall flow with the other. But ſuppoſing that our ſufferings were as conſtant as they are ſevere, that they were as conſiderable in number as degree, and that

we were aſſured they would continue as long as our lives, yet even in this deplorable condition we may with pleaſure reflect, that the man that is born of a woman is of few days, ſo that our misfortunes will ſoon have an end; we may triumphantly conſider, that our momentary afflictions will work for us an eternal and far more exceeding weight of glory.

On the whole therefore, ſince trouble ſpringeth not out of the ground, but is ſent and directed by an all-gracious, wiſe, and powerful God, ſince afflictions are the common burthen of our nature, and the very ſevereſt of them are not the adequate wages of our crimes, ſince they are generally more than counterpoiſed with bleſſings, are to be endured but a ſhort time, and will if properly borne turn to a good account, for theſe ſeveral reaſons, if thou come

come to ſerve the Lord, prepare thy ſoul for temptation. Set thy heart, and conſtantly endure and make not haſte in time of trouble. Cleave unto him and depart not away, that thou mayeſt be encreaſed at thy latter end. Whatſoever is brought upon thee take chearfully, and be patient when thou art changed to a low eſtate; that ſo ſuffering according to the will of God, we may commit the keeping of our ſouls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, &c. &c.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

MATTHEW vi. 11th.

Give us this day our daily Bread.

THIS is the only petition in the Lord's Prayer, which immediately relates to our temporal proſperity, and the obtaining of ſuch things as are neceſſary to our Being and well-being in this life. Many of the primitive Chriſtians were of opinion, that the Bread which our Lord here teaches us to pray for, was not to be underſtood of any good things relating to the body, but of the Euchariſtical Bread in the Lord's Supper, and of the ſpiritual ſuſtenance thereby conveyed to the ſoul by the increaſe

of

of grace; and hence aroſe the cuſtom of receiving that ſacrament every day. The error of this opinion however is ſufficiently evident, from a conſideration of the time wherein our Saviour taught his diſciples this prayer, and the time wherein he inſtituted the ſacrament, the one in the very infancy of his miniſtry, the other, not till the eve of his crucifixion; ſo that during that interval, the Apoſtles, and all who made uſe of this prayer, muſt, in repeating this petition for their daily bread, have petitioned for they knew not what, and prayed without any effect upon the underſtanding and heart; a thing not ſuppoſable in any, much leſs in ſuch a maſter as Chriſt; whoſe doctrines are all calculated for the edification of his diſciples, and who cannot therefore be thought to have inſerted in a form of prayer compoſed for their uſe, a petition which, for ſome length

length of time, could not poſſibly be of any uſe to them at all.

Inſtead therefore of perplexing ourſelves with vain ſuppoſitions, I ſhall embrace that plain and eaſy meaning, which is moſt free from all objections, and was moſt probably intended by our Lord, and received by his diſciples; namely, that by Bread here we are to underſtand all the neceſſaries, conveniencies, and comforts of this life, all that may be neceſſary for our ſupport, and conduce to our refreſhment.

Bread being the chief ſupport of life, is, by a figure very common with all, but more eſpecially with the Scripture writers, ſet to denote all the other various things requiſite for that purpoſe. By daily Bread here prayed for we are to underſtand ſuch a portion of thoſe good things as may be ſufficient

ſufficient for the day being, which, conſidering the weakneſs and mortality of our nature, is a great, nay and a greater continuance, than we can with certainty promiſe ourſelves in this life. But though the term of our life may poſſibly extend no farther than the preſent day, yet as it may, for any thing that we can tell, be lengthened out to many years, we are therefore taught to pray that this Bread may be given us this day, or, as ſaint Luke has it, day by day, a phraſe according to Hebrew writers, ſignifying the whole term of our lives, that God would during our Being here, be it longer or ſhorter, ſupply us with ſuch things as are neceſſary for our well-being here, in ſuch a manner, and in ſuch proportions as he ſhall ſee moſt conducive to our real benefit This is the true purport of the petition, and though ſpiritual good things are of the greateſt moment,

moment, and conſequently demand our chief concern, yet, let zeal without knowledge pretend what it will, temporal good things demand, and indeed deſerve our reaſonable attention. It is abſolutely neceſſary, that we ſhould pray to the Author of our being for ſuch things as are neceſſary to preſerve it, for ſuch things as reaſon and ſcripture make it our duty to ſeek, and which yet without his concurrence we ſhould ſeek in vain; that we ſhould pray in the words of our Lord, according to the ſenſe now given of them, for our daily bread, and in the language of our church, aſk thoſe things which are requiſite and neceſſary, as well for the body as the ſoul.

This petition is calculated to breed in us a thorough perſuaſion of, and dependance upon the providence of God in general, and particularly as it relates to the ſupply of

of our wants. It naturally implies to us, that the ſame God which at firſt created, ſtill governs and preſerves the world, that no perſons are exempted from his juriſdiction, that the moſt minute occurrences of life are at his diſpoſal, that without his bleſſing all our labours are ineffectual, and the wiſeſt, moſt induſtrious, and careful man on earth, is not able without his concurrence to acquire even his daily bread. This is a leſſon, which many who are wiſe in their own conceits find it difficult to learn; exalted in dignity and power, great in human knowledge and worldly wiſdom, they imagine every thing to be within their own reach, there is nothing which they cannot do themſelves of themſelves, and therefore it is unneceſſary to have recourſe to a Providence, and apply for the aſſiſtance of foreign aid, when their own forces

are

are ſo amply ſufficient to accompliſh all their deſires.

It is this vain and preſumptuous way of thinking, which leads men into numberleſs miſcarriages, which induces them to deſpiſe the uſeful aſſiſtances of men, and to reject their neceſſary dependance upon God, which renders them at length (when they experimentally find the vanity of human wiſdom and the weakneſs of human ſtrength) the contempt of the greater part of mankind, and the pity of the wiſer few, who will happily learn from their error and diſappointment, to truſt in the Lord with all their heart, and not to lean on their own underſtanding.

If we look into ourſelves with an impartial eye, we ſhall eaſily diſcern the numberleſs

berleſs things which we ſtand in need of in this world, and at the ſame glance ſee the impoſſibility of our acquiring them of ourſelves; and ſuch perſons, as ſeem the fartheſt removed from theſe wants, who are bleſt with the greateſt affluence, will find abundant reaſon, when they conſider the uncertainty of human affairs, to diſtruſt their own proſperous condition, and apply to Providence, who was the firſt giver, to be the continuer alſo of thoſe bleſſings, which are in themſelves ſo uncertain, and always upon the wing. Man indeed, upon a fair review of himſelf, of his wants and weakneſs, ought to eſteem it his greateſt happineſs, that there is a reſource above to which he may always betake himſelf, that there is an overruling Providence in whom are centered infinite power, wiſdom, and goodneſs, which are continually diſplaying themſelves in the moſt perfect harmony, and

and graciouſly co-operating for his good. Left to ourſelves, what miſerable creatures ſhould we be? but happily for us we have a ſupport much better than ourſelves, and where man fails, God ſtrengthens and ſupports. Happy are we, would we but be wiſe enough to know, and humble enough to acknowledge it, in the aſſiſtance of an almighty power, the direction of an all-comprehending wiſdom, the liberality of an all-ſuſtaining goodneſs.

Here then is thy ſtay O man, here is thy only ſolid dependance. Throw off thoſe vain and deceitful dependances which ariſe from things tranſitory, repoſe thyſelf upon thy Maker, and get thee to thy God right humbly. To him apply who is always ready to hear, and able to relieve thee; on him depend, who will not, who cannot deceive thee. Whether thou doſt petition

for

for the obtaining of what thou wanteſt, or the continuance of what thou haſt, for things of greater or leſs conſequence, whether matters of conveniency and comfort are the ſubjects of thy prayers, or in the humility of thine heart thou aſkeſt only for thy daily Bread literally underſtood, be aſſured that if you pray as you ought, you ſhall obtain what you pray for, if it is really for your good.

And this leads me to conſider, which I ſhall make the remaining buſineſs of this diſcourſe, what qualifications are requiſite, to ſanctify our offering up of this petition, to render it acceptable in the ſight of God, and procure an happy return to it.

The firſt thing neceſſary towards procuring what we want, is a proper uſe of what we have; and this petition doth

naturally warn us againſt the dangerous extremes of extravagance and avarice, and recommends to us that liberality on the one hand, which in oppoſition to avarice, enables us to enjoy what we have, and that frugality on the other, which in oppoſition to extravagance, ſerves to render our enjoyments laſting. Vain and preſumptuous is it for man to expect that the liberal hand of Providence will continue to ſhower down bleſſings upon him, which he ungratefully makes a bad uſe of, or not leſs ungratefully makes no uſe at all. Inſtances there are, and not a few in the world, of men, who ſeem to think that Providence is employed entirely for them, and that the chief buſineſs of the general ſupporter of mankind is a particular attention to, and a conſtant readineſs to furniſh them with materials to gratify their moſt irregular inclinations, and ſupport them

them in their extravagancies; whilſt others not leſs miſtaken, eſteem themſelves moſt juſtly entitled to the favours of Providence, becauſe they with great good œconomy make no uſe of them at all; have neither the heart to enjoy their riches themſelves, nor to communicate them to others. The truth indeed is this; both theſe extremes are bad, both diſqualify us from being worthy repeaters of this petition, and cut off thoſe hopes which we otherwiſe might reaſonably entertain of offering it up with ſucceſs. The extravagant man is guilty of preſumption, in daring to depend upon a continuance of thoſe bleſſings which he continually abuſes; and the covetous man, whilſt he is fearful of uſing what he hath leſt he ſhould come to want, is guilty of that diſtruſt in Providence, which is contrary to the deſign, and deſtructive of the foundation of this petition. In a word,

thoſe who ſhew themſelves unworthy of poſſeſſing what they have, ſhew themſelves unworthy alſo of obtaining what they aſk.

The next thing neceſſary to render this petition ſucceſsful, is moderation in our requeſts. A great privilege it is, a real bleſſing, that God commands us to offer up, and promiſes to receive, our prayers; but great and ungrateful inſolence ſurely it is in us, if we abuſe that privilege, if we preſume upon that promiſe ſo far as to aſk more than God hath given us warrant to expect. Though the goodneſs of the divine nature is ſuch, that he is willing to overlook our infirmities, and put our ſins far from us, though he hath graciouſly promiſed to liſten to our petitions, and grant our requeſts, yet this promiſe is made to us not abſolutely, but ſtill at the diſcretion of his perfect wiſdom; and greatly indeed

indeed is it to be feared, that if men were certainly to obtain what they prayed for, the efficacy of prayer would by the folly of man be turned into a curſe, inſtead of proving a bleſſing.

Would men rightly conſider, whereas indeed great numbers of them never conſider at all, they would eaſily ſee that prayer was never deſigned as a means of gratifying ambition, avarice, or ſenſuality; but of obtaining thoſe real neceſſaries, thoſe material conveniencies, thoſe ſolid comforts, from an all-ſuſtaining Providence, which nature requires, and could not be happy without. The real wants, nay, and the reaſonable comforts of man lye within a very ſmall compaſs. Hurried on by mad paſſions indeed, and forming vaſt and viſionary ſchemes, we multiply, we aggravate our wants, and of one real create

a thouſand imaginary neceſſities; whereas Nature in herſelf, that is, Nature ſupported and directed by Reaſon, is contented with a little, and doth not require a great deal to give her that happineſs which ſhe is capable of in her preſent ſtate. We deceive ourſelves therefore, if we imagine that this petition gives us an unbounded right of aſking, in the extravagance of our hearts, for the delicacies and ſuperfluities of life; all that our Saviour warrants is our petitioning for the neceſſaries and conveniencies of it; for our daily Bread, and that from day to day.

But after all, after we have worked ourſelves up to a proper pitch of confidence in the Providence of God, made a proper uſe of thoſe good things which he hath already bleſt us with, and regulated our deſires for what we pray according to the dictates

dictates of reaſon ſtill, there remains ſomething farther to be done; and an honeſt induſtry is required on our parts to make us worthy of God's aſſiſtance.

From ſome paſſages in Scripture, miſunderſtood and wretchedly perverted, explained in a manner contrary to reaſon, and contrary to other expreſs paſſages in Scripture which can never be miſunderſtood, there have not been wanting, and perhaps never will be wanting, men who would willingly talk induſtry out of the world, and call lazineſs and indolence dependance upon Providence; who, truly enthuſiaſtlike, pretending to ſeek the kingdom of God, preſume that all theſe things ſhall be added unto them, without any care, any trouble on their ſide. How contrary is this to reaſon, to the circumſtances of the world, to the doctrines of Chriſtianity?

The Scriptures do no where countenance a ſupine throwing ourſelves upon Providence, without any farther concern for ourſelves. We have no right to expect a miraculous interpoſition in our behalf, to hope that we ſhall be fed, as the Iſraelites, with food from Heaven, or think that our lands, like Gideon's fleece, ſhall be well watered, whilſt all around us are dry and barren. Theſe are particular vouchſafements of Providence, and not to be expected by us; but when we do the beſt we can, when we acquit ourſelves like diligent, induſtrious and provident men, then may we pray to God to crown our labours with ſucceſs, then may we depend upon him for our daily bread, and live ſecurely under his care and protection, without perplexing ourſelves with vain fears; and all fears are vain, when we have ſecured ourſelves an

intereſt

intereſt in the moſt High, who is always willing, always able to ſupply our wants

To crown the reſt, let us laſtly add Charity. Senſible of our own wants, let us conſider our brethren; and whilſt we in this petition acknowledge our dependance upon Providence, let us in a more acceptable manner acknowledge it, by ſhewing our regard to his creatures. All that we have, all that we hope for, we here refer to God, and ought in good reaſon to beſtow ſome part of it in the manner which he hath appointed; to deal out our bread to the hungry, and to conſider the cauſe of the poor; to be merciful to our brethren in proportion as God has been favourable to us.

There is no one duty which is ſo highly extolled in Scripture, and hath ſo many powerful

powerful motives to enforce it, as Charity; and if we expect the continuance of the bleſſings of Providence, the beſt way to enſure them is to be merciful as our Father is merciful.

I would not be underſtood to mean (making that a general which was only a particular precept) that it is the duty of every rich man to ſell all, and give to the poor, much leſs, according to the maxims of our inſpired preachers, that it is the duty of the poor to ſell all, and give to the rich; ſo far from it, that it is every man's duty to provide for his family, and Chriſtianity doth not deſtroy, but confirms the law of nature, and the rules of prudence. What is required of us is, not to deceive ourſelves, by fancying our neceſſities greater and our abilities leſs than they really are, but to follow at once the dictates of Prudence

dence and Charity, not giving away ſo much as to expoſe ourſelves to future want, nor yet diſtributing ſo little, as to be unworthy petitioners to Providence, for the ſupply of our own neceſſities.

Having thus ſeen the nature and extent of this petition, with the qualifications requiſite to make our repeating of it acceptable to God, I ſhall, according to the manner I have hitherto obſerved, conclude this diſcourſe by ſumming up the whole in the form of a prayer.

O thou all-gracious, all-ſuſtaining Providence, by whoſe goodneſs we were created, and by whoſe goodneſs we have hitherto been preſerved, continue to us thy favour and protection; give us ſuch a juſt knowledge both of thee, and of ourſelves, that we may be thoroughly ſenſible we are thy dependants,

dependants, that we are indebted to thee for all we have, and muſt apply to thee for all we want. Grant, O Lord, that we may ſo live in this world, as men that muſt leave it at one time or other, that may continue perhaps for a few years, or may be taken off this very moment; make us ſenſible how few our real wants are, and let not our deſires go beyond them. Let thy mercies crown our induſtrious endeavours with ſucceſs, and a well timed ſeaſonable Charity, ſanctify our works, and give ſtrength to our prayers. And finally, O Lord, be pleaſed of thine infinite mercy to grant, that whatſoever we ſincerely pray for, we may ſucceſsfully obtain, whatſoever we ſucceſsfully obtain, we may happily enjoy.

Now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

MATTHEW vi. 12th.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

IN theſe words are two things obſervable;—the Petition—forgive us our debts,—and the condition on which we aſk forgiveneſs—as we forgive our debtors. Both theſe are ſubjects that greatly deſerve our conſideration—the one as it affords the higheſt inſtance of God's goodneſs to the ſons of men, the other as containing a motive to the forgiveneſs of our enemies, which is one of the hardeſt of all Chriſtian duties. I ſhall therefore particularly conſider them, and ſhall ſhew that the mercy and

and goodneſs of God, is remarkably diſplayed, by the permiſſion here given us to pray to him, for the forgiveneſs of our ſins.

The temporal bleſſings which his Providence diſpenſes for the ſupply of our wants, are arguments indeed of great goodneſs to us, and deſerve our higheſt gratitude and love. But theſe are concerns of ſmall moment to us, in compariſon of thoſe which look beyond the grave, and yield a proſpect of better things to come. For what would it avail us to be ſupplied by his bounty with the neceſſaries of this preſent life, if our ſins were to follow us in the next? If the ſins and offences of our youth and old age were regiſtered and treaſured up againſt us, if no act of oblivion was to paſs on our actions, no pardon granted, no method of atonement appointed

ed to blot out our ſins, no aſſurance that our prayers ſhall be heard, no direction to aſk that our debts may be forgiven as we forgive our debtors, we ſhould as the Apoſtle ſays, all have been concluded under ſin, and conſequently under puniſhment; our condemnation had been ſure, our ſentence irreverſible, and the bleſſings and conveniencies we at preſent enjoy, would only have ſerved to make eaſy our paſſage to a ſtate of everlaſting miſery; and who could be ſo fond of a ſhort momentary life, as to value it upon ſuch terms as theſe? It is the glorious proſpect we have before us, the certainty that if we are not wanting to ourſelves we may work out our own ſalvation, and obtain by the ſatisfaction of our Saviour, what we were not able to ſecure for ourſelves; the means of forgiveneſs are placed in our own hands, and therefore it will be our own faults if we miſcarry.

miſcarry. And when we conſider the wretched ſtate we were in before Chriſt undertook our ranſom, the neceſſity of ſinning, the certainty of our puniſhment, and how little reaſon there was for God to accept of a ſatisfaction and reconcile us to himſelf; we cannot but eſteem it a wonderful inſtance of God's goodneſs that he was pleaſed to provide a remedy, and point out a method by which Mercy might take place, and yet Juſtice be fully ſatisfied.

The uſe therefore that we ought to make of this amazing goodneſs, is firſt to reflect with gratitude, to acknowledge the ſenſe we have of our unworthineſs to receive it, and the utter impoſſibility of our obtaining mercy without the free grace of God.

As there was nothing in our power to influence God to ſhew us mercy, as there was

was no ſatisfaction but the blood of our Redeemer that could conſiſtently with God's juſtice, be accepted by him, our condition was quite deſperate; and no one could have expected, that God himſelf ſhould ſubmit to pay the ranſom for us, or indeed that it was poſſible to unite the divine nature in ſuch a manner to our ſinful fleſh, that as man had ſinned ſo man ſhould ſuffer; and yet that his ſufferings by virtue of that Union, ſhould be a full, perfect, and ſufficient ſacrifice, though impoſſible for mere man to make it. But thus it was ordered; thus was God ſatisfied, and Man redeemed from miſery. And he who is not affected by ſuch benefits as theſe, who can reflect on them without love and gratitude, as he certainly will, ſo he well deſerves to loſe them, ſince notwithſtanding Chriſt's ſufferings, his portion will be no better for them.

And this leads me to obſerve another uſe we ought to make of God's goodneſs thus manifeſted to us, which is, that we labour to ſecure the bleſſings thus purchaſed for us by the blood of Chriſt. It is true, there is now no other ſacrifice required by God, but the Blood of our Redeemer, who was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, was bruiſed for our iniquities; the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and by his ſtripes were we healed. But we are not ſo healed and recovered, as to be in no danger of relapſing; we are not ſo reſcued from the bondage of ſin, as to be perfectly ſecure of God's favour for the future. The Chriſtian life is a ſtate of trial and conflict; he who bought us with a price hath a right to our Obedience, and when he exempted us from the puniſhment of our ſins, he required us to forſake them, to abſtain from all wilful,

wilful, and premeditated offences, and to repent of thoſe miſcarriages, which through the frailty and infirmity of our nature are unavoidable; above all to pray to God for mercy and forgiveneſs, and in order to obtain it, to be ready to forgive others; as Chriſt hath taught us, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. So that to forgive thoſe that treſpaſs againſt us, is a neceſſary condition without which we cannot pray for the forgiveneſs of our treſpaſſes.

Since then it is a matter of ſo much conſequence to our happineſs, and a duty, which if we may judge from the practice of mankind, is one of the moſt difficult of any our religion requires, I ſhall make it my buſineſs to conſider it more particularly.

In order to come to a full knowledge of theſe words, we muſt firſt enquire in what extent they are to be underſtood; for in the ſame extent that we pray to be forgiven, it is our duty to forgive. Now when we pray to God to forgive us our treſpaſſes, we do not only mean that he ſhall not puniſh us for them, but alſo that he ſhould reſtore us to the ſame degree of love and favour that we ſtood in before we ſinned, that he would extend the goodneſs of his Providence to us, and vouchſafe us both temporal and eternal bleſſings. Of what great importance it is to us to be thus reſtored to God's favour is obvious to any one; but there is one condition annexed to it which is to be feared does ſometimes prevent men from attempting it, and this is the forgiveneſs of our enemies; by which we are not to underſtand the mere abſtaining from

from hurting them, but alſo the ſeeking every opportunity to do them good.

We ought according to our Saviour's command to love our enemies, bleſs them that curſe us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe and perſecute us. This is the deſcription that our Saviour gives us of this duty, and the greateſt objection againſt the practice of it ariſes from the vaſt difficulty that is ſuppoſed to attend it. Many have gone ſo far as to ſay it might be performed by an holy Apoſtle or perfect Saviour, but was without the reach of a common Chriſtian; and indeed in our preſent circumſtances, the corruption of our nature, the violence of our paſſions, and the miſtaken notions of the world conſidered, it is of all Chriſtian duties by far the moſt difficult to perform. But ſince God has made it the condition

upon which we are to expect forgiveneſs, it is abſolutely neceſſary for us to perform it, before we can have any title to the promiſe; for as our Saviour aſſures us, if ye forgive men their treſpaſſes, your heavenly Father will alſo forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your treſpaſſes.

If we conſider in how much greater a degree we have offended againſt God, than it is poſſible for any one to offend againſt us, we ſhall ſoon ſee the reaſonableneſs of performing the condition for the reward annexed to it. The hopes of having our ſins pardoned, and obtaining eternal ſalvation ſhould certainly appear of ſuch value in our ſight, as no labour however hard, no taſk however difficult ſhould deter us from ſuch great expectations, much leſs ſhould

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the reaſonable duty of doing as we would be done-by, of forgiving others that we ourſelves may obtain forgiveneſs. If God is willing to remit to us a debt of ſo vaſt amount as ten thouſand talents, ſhall we, with the wicked ſervant in the Goſpel, rigorouſly exact from a fellow ſervant the payment of an hundred pence? Should not we alſo have compaſſion on our fellow ſervants even as God has pity on us?

There are many motives to enforce the forgiveneſs of injuries beſides this, and one of theſe is, that it is an action truly great and honourable. Whatever advantages an high and revengeful ſpirit may have in the eyes of the world, and however mean it may be eſteemed to put up and forgive injuries, Religion teaches us quite a different leſſon. It inſtructs us that nothing can be truly honourable, which is not truly good,

that nothing can be truly good which is not agreeable to the will of God; and that nothing can be agreeable to the will of God which is contrary to the laws his bleſſed Son has given us in the Goſpel; and theſe preſcribe to us to be meek as he is meek, and lowly as he is lowly.

But to deſcend from Religion to the opinion of the world. If there is any honour in gaining a victory, then is the forgiveneſs of injuries truly honourable. It places us in eminence above our enemy, it gives us an invinſible ſuperiority over him, it makes us proof againſt all his devices, and unhurt by all his attacks; we either make him our friend, or convince mankind that he ought not to be our enemy; we either deprive him of the inclination to prejudice us, or ſubject him to the contempt of all good men if he perſeveres in it; and

and at the ſame time that we make known the meekneſs of our diſpoſition by forgiving his ill offices, we approve our reſolution by not attending to the conſequences of his anger. If our enemy is worth the gaining, Forgiveneſs is the beſt and moſt approved method to accompliſh that end; if he is not, Forgiveneſs is the beſt method of puniſhing him, as it ſerves moſt effectually to diſappoint his aim, to ſhew that his malice cannot reach us, and to gall him with that thought which men can leaſt bear, that we hold him in contempt, and think him beneath our notice.

A falſe notion of honour may repreſent to us the conquering of an enemy as a great and glorious action; but true reaſon will tell us, that to conquer ourſelves, and forgive an enemy, is much more great, and, as it is more difficult, more honourable likewiſe

likewiſe. This is indeed a ſpecies of honour which will ſcarce find its way into the breaſt of a Hero, and meet with a favourable reception from thoſe who call raſhneſs courage, and diſgrace the name of Honour by applying it improperly. Conſider the preſent acceptation of that word; we might imagine that it was the ſworn foe of Honeſty, Reaſon, and Religion, inſtead of being the genuine offspring of them all. A modern Man of Honour (as He calls himſelf, and as the World will be complaiſant enough to call him) lives to Paſſion, and not to Reaſon; He lives in a conſtant ſubjection to the opinions of others, nor for a moment ſuffers himſelf to have an opinion of his own; he takes things upon truſt from thoſe whom he ought leaſt to depend upon; he fears ſhame more than guilt, the imputation of crimes more than being criminal; he trembles at reproach (though

(though undeſervd) more than at danger, or even death, and prides himſelf on his courage at the very inſtant that he gives the ſtrongeſt proof of his being a Coward. To revenge, even in what we miſcall an honourable way, is an effort which many a Coward hath againſt his nature forced himſelf to make, but we cannot meet with a ſingle inſtance where he could induce himſelf to forgive. This is a taſk left for men of great and generous diſpoſitions, for men who are as much above fearing, as doing ill, for men who have a true ſenſe of Honour, and, in conſequence thereof, doing every thing which They ought to do, fear nothing but what They ought to fear.

Another, and no weak motive to the forgiveneſs of our enemies, is that quiet, and ſatisfaction of mind which naturally reſults from it. The man of a revengeful

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ſpirit lives in a perpetual ſtorm, he is his own tormentor, and his guilt of courſe becomes his puniſhment. Thoſe paſſions, which prompt him to wreek his vengeance on his enemies, war againſt his own ſoul, and are inconſiſtent with his peace. Whether he is at home or abroad, alone or in company, They ſtill adhere to him, and engroſs his thoughts; and Providence hath with the greateſt reaſon ordained, that whoſoever meditates againſt the peace of another ſhall, even in the deſign, loſe his own. The thoughts of Revenge break in upon his moſt ſerious and important buſineſs, embitter his moſt rational entertainments, and forbid him to reliſh any of thoſe good things which God hath placed within his reach; ever intent on the contrivance of miſchief, or engaged in the execution, mortified with diſappointments, or, his deſigns accompliſhed, tortured with reflection,

he

he lives the life of a devil here on earth, and carries about a hell in his own breaſt. Whereas the meek man, who lives in a conſtant courſe of good will to all, who gives no man cauſe to be his enemy, and dares to forgive thoſe who are ſo without a cauſe, hath a conſtant ſpring of pleaſure in himſelf; let what will happen from without, he is ſure of peace within. So far from being afraid to converſe with himſelf, he ſeeks and is happy in the opportunity of doing it, and meets with nothing in his own breaſt but what encourages him to keep up and cheriſh that acquaintance. The Paſſions which he finds there, inſtead of being tyrants, are ſervants; he knows the danger of obeying, and the impoſſibility of rooting them out; and, whilſt he forbids them to aſſume an undue influence, makes them the inſtruments of promoting his happineſs. Happy in himſelf, he is eaſy to

all;

all; he is a friend to mankind in general, and not an enemy even to thoſe who hate him; doth a momentary thought of revenge ariſe in his mind, he ſuppreſſes it; if on no other conſiderations, for his own ſake; this he knows to be his duty, and this he finds to be his pleaſure; bleſt with thoſe feelings, which ſhall not leave him at the grave, he imitates the Deity in benevolence, and obtains, as far as mortals can obtain, the happineſs of the Deity in return.

Leſt theſe conſiderations prove ineffectual, let me add the neceſſity we lay under of forgiving our enemies, or of relinquiſhing all hopes of being forgiven. There is no alternative. We muſt do it, or reſign all pretenſions to the benefits of Chriſt's paſſion. Though the performance of this duty alone will not entitle us to the forgiveneſs of our ſins; yet this we are moſt

ſpecially

ſpecially inſtructed in, that the performance of all other duties, without this, will be of no avail. The difficulty, attending this work, inſtead of taking off our attention, ought to double it, and quicken our endeavours; That it is neceſſary to be done, the Scriptures inform us, and therefore it muſt be undertaken; That it is difficult to be done, our own feelings inform us, and therefore it ſhould be undertaken with ſpirit; That it is not impoſſible to be done, and that we may accompliſh it if we will, the very enjoinment of the duty implies; That, when accompliſhed, we ſhall not loſe our reward, the Conſiderations I have already mentioned, with our own obſervation and experience, will happily evince.

Now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON

and opportunities of performing, or refuſing to do his duty. Thus the laws of God to mankind in general, or to Chriſtians in particular, the former by Nature, the latter by Revelation, are temptations or trials of our obedience, whether we will obſerve them or not; and in regard that the circumſtances of men are very various, and that they have reſpective duties to be performed, therefore every man's particular condition of life, his honour or meanneſs, his wealth or poverty, his authority or ſubjection, his ſingle or married ſtate, his temper and conſtitution of body, his health or ſickneſs, his calling and profeſſion, in a word, his condition in life, with reſpect to circumſtances of this nature, which are infinite, is a temptation or trial, whether he will live up to the general rules of his religion, and perform that duty which his place, relation, and peculiar intereſt in the

world,

world, require of him. In this ſenſe then, every man is led into temptation; that is, he hath the general rules of religion to obſerve, and the particular duties proper to his place and condition to perform. And God who requires theſe, and by whoſe providence men are put into ſuch circumſtances, may ſo far be ſaid to lead a man into Temptation. But as every man in this ſenſe, is, and muſt be tempted, this cannot be the meaning of the words, when we pray, not to be led into Temptation. By Temptation we may here alſo underſtand, thoſe hazardous trials with which God is pleaſed ſometimes to prove good, and puniſh wicked men. So that God may be ſaid to lead a man into Temptation, when he permits ſome extraordinary accidents to befal him, in order to try his ſincerity. It is impoſſible to mention the various kinds of Temptation to which we are liable, and

perhaps it would be very hard for any man to declare which Temptation he could beſt reſiſt, or which would be moſt difficult to him. We are ſo ignorant of ourſelves, in things of this nature, that we know not what trial we can beſt encounter; therefore, we ought to leave the petition to God in general, as our Saviour hath here taught us, namely that God would not lead us into Temptation, or that he would keep thoſe Temptations from us, which he, who beſt knows our make and frame, by his infinite wiſdom ſees will moſt endanger us.

Having thus conſidered the firſt part of this petition, I proceed to the ſecond.

But deliver us from evil: which ſignifies the ſame, and ſomething more than the former. The ſame, as including deliverance from great and dangerous temptations; but

more,

more, as the evil is greater to fall under Temptations, than only to be tempted. If conſidered in the former ſenſe, it implies God's providence in alloting us ſuch a portion in this life, as he ſees is beſt for our ſpiritual eſtate, and in removing from us whatever he knows to be inconſiſtent therewith. It is alſo to be underſtood of thoſe innumerable methods of Providence, by which God keeps men from ſundry temptations that would befal them, if he did not interpoſe to prevent them. Taking it in the latter ſenſe, as keeping us from being overcome by temptations when they happen, then the petition means, the good providence of God without us, and the motions and operations of his holy Spirit within us, whereby he ſupports and preſerves thoſe who in the time of their trials truſt in him. God delivers us by his outward providences, and which are very con-

ſiderable; ſometimes by the good examples of others labouring under the ſame circumſtances, ſometimes by the faithful advice of a friend, the ſeaſonable preſence of a good man, a ſudden change in our fortunes, and divers unforeſeen accidents, caſual indeed to us, but purpoſely ordered by the wiſe diſpoſal of God, to prevent our being led away by Temptations that aſſault us; therefore, in this prayer, we commit ourſelves to the good Providence of God, that he would ſtill continue to preſerve us by ſuch ways as to his wiſdom ſeems moſt requiſite. By the operations of his holy ſpirit within us, he delivers us from evil under Temptation, when he repreſents to us the reaſons of our duty, and ſtrongly impreſſes them on our minds; whereby good men have been often reſcued from their paſſions, and kept from falling when on the brink of danger. Therefore, in this

prayer

prayer we intreat God not to caſt us away from his preſence, nor take his holy ſpirit from us, that he would not forſake us when we are in the greateſt danger of forgetting him, but that his grace may prevent us from yielding to any Temptation, whether ſudden, violent, or long, that ſo we may never be tempted above what we are able to bear.

I ſhall now offer ſome conſiderations that ſhould make us in good earneſt pray againſt Temptations, that they may not overcome us, nor draw us into ſin.

Firſt, let us conſider the great conſequence of being overcome by Temptations.

If we are prevailed on to act contrary to our duty, the beſt end we can make is a ſorrowful repentance; and which if ſincere,

brings abundantly more trouble, than the tranſitory enjoyment and ſatisfaction of the moſt pleaſing ſin. The advantage gained by conſenting to a Temptation, is gone long before we come to repent. Revenge is no longer ſweet, than while the paſſion of malice laſts, and what a man acquires unjuſtly, muſt be reſtored the moment true repentance begins. So that it is evidently neceſſary for our own eaſe and quiet, not to enter into Temptation, or fall by it, though we ſhould repent and reform, which is the beſt end we can promiſe ourſelves; but if we ſuppoſe the worſt, that a man grows more eaſy to his ſins, and more readily yields to the Devil's ſuggeſtions, ſo as to fill up the meaſure of his iniquity, what follows? nothing leſs than fire unquenchable. If then we are concerned for the end, if we fear the dreadful ſentence of everlaſting miſery, we have need, great need to pray,

Lord,

Lord, lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil.

The great difficulty of reſiſting Temptations, is another reaſon for our uſing this petition in good earneſt. For if we conſider the variety and number of Temptations, we ſhall find no age, calling, or condition of life, no conſtitution of body or mind, totally free from all Temptations.

Youth is ſollicited by pleaſure and wantonneſs; riper years by the cares and pride of life; old age by diſcontent and ſpitefulneſs, and, to the admiration of all conſiderate perſons, by ſenſeleſs covetouſneſs. A calling gives an opportunity for diſhoneſty and hard-dealing, griping and oppreſſions, and adminiſters Temptations to falſehood and lying. A free ſanguine temper is apt to run into improprieties, and good-nature into

into debauchery; a reſerved diſpoſition into ſullenneſs and diſcontent; ſo that every conſtitution hath its incident danger. If we converſe with our friends, we are in danger of being flattered, if with our enemies, of encreaſing malice and revenge. Commendation is apt to make us vain, reproof angry, reproach and contempt to fill us with hatred. If one hath more wealth, honour, beauty, or reſpect than another, he is ready to be elated with pride; or if he ſees himſelf herein excelled by any, that is a Temptation to envy.

If we live in eaſe and plenty, we are in danger of falling into ſloth and idleneſs; if we have much to do, then contention, peeviſhneſs and all the vices incident to buſineſs, lie in wait to aſſault us. It is hard to bear ſickneſs after long health, and to fall from wealth into poverty, or take up

up the croſs. As in a ſuffering condition, there are Temptations which naturally ariſe, and the change itſelf is a very ſevere one, ſo when a man unexpectedly comes into proſperity, luxury and wantonneſs, pride and forgetfulneſs of God, will then more eaſily beſet him.

In a word, we are expoſed to the danger of divers ſins and luſts, each of which has ſeveral Temptations, and the one often makes the other ſtronger. Being then thus beſet with dangers, it behoves us not only to be very circumſpect, but to pray alſo, Lord, ſave us, or we periſh.

The frequency of Temptations is alſo another argument to prove the neceſſity of conſtant prayer. The Temptation may be changed, but is never quite removed. Whilſt we are in the world we are ſtill on

trial

trial and duty. We have many enemies near at hand, always buſy and urgent upon us, ſo that we had need to watch and pray. A man's table is a ſnare to him, his wealth an occaſion of falling; he is often betrayed into exceſs, when he ſuſpects no danger; if full of buſineſs, he is expoſed to irreligion, covetouſneſs, and anger; if inclined to company, he is eaſily ſeduced to evil ſpeaking; he hath his tongue to bridle, his appetites and paſſions to manage, and to preſerve himſelf from the temptations of fooliſh mirth, uncharitable cenſures, and all the vices of converſation.

Laſtly, we have our own depraved nature to ſtruggle with. Our outward ſenſes are ever ready to let in Temptation, our imagination to entertain it, and our reaſon not ſtrong enough to reſiſt it. We are alſo beſet with a ſubtle and malicious adverſary, who

who goeth about like a roaring lion, ſeeking whom he may devour; his approaches are ſly and imperceptible; he is buſy about us, when we think not of him. We are doing his work and conſenting to his ſuggeſtions, when we only ſuppoſe ourſelves to be gratifying an unreaſonable appetite, to pleaſe a companion, or falſe friend. On all theſe accounts then, it behoves us to pray in good earneſt, that we may not be led into Temptation, but delivered from Evil; and this brings me to obſerve, laſtly, what qualifications are neceſſary to make us ſincere in praying to be delivered from Temptation. And theſe are, to have a modeſt and humble opinion of ourſelves, to be ſenſible of the dangers, difficulties, and our own inability to prevail againſt them, without the ſpecial grace of God. We muſt alſo have a firm belief and truſt in the grace and providence of God, acknowledging

ledging that he governs and over-rules all things; that the courſe of this world is not merely conducted by natural cauſes, and the free-will of man; but that God always can, and ſometimes does interpoſe, to alter the courſe of nature, and the inclinations of free agents, for the benefit of the good, and the puniſhment of the wicked.

Laſtly, we muſt be moſt willing and deſirous to keep innocence, and to do the thing that is right; otherwiſe we do not, in good earneſt, deſire the concurrence of God's providence and grace to this purpoſe. And this our ſincerity we ſhould expreſs by a general care of doing all we can to contribute towards it; more particularly in not encouraging evil thoughts and imaginations, which tend to corrupt our wills and affections, and to make them break out into practice. He that plays with wanton, ambitious,

ambitious, or covetous fancies, is acting for the Devil againſt himſelf. To be often thinking on the riches and advantages of another, is the beginning of envy. We are therefore to watch and pray, that we enter not into Temptation, and the man who will not watch over himſelf, is not fit to pray that God would watch over him.

We muſt alſo be careful to avoid all Temptation to ſin as much as poſſible, and every thing that will make our duty difficult. If we do not ourſelves carefully avoid Temptation, how can we deſire God to keep us from it. Every man ſhould conſider in what inſtances he is moſt likely to be tempted. This, upon an examination of our paſt actions we may eaſily find. For if we are ignorant of our own temper, yet we may eaſily know what our practice has been, and from thence learn what thoſe

temptations

temptations and occaſions of ſin are, which we ſhould principally ſhun. To reflect on our paſt converſation, cannot indeed undo what has happened, but it may prevent the like for the future, by rendering us more cautious and vigilant. And he who doth not ſeriouſly endeavour to know his greateſt danger, and how to avoid it, ſpeaks words at random, when he deſires God to deliver him from Temptation.

To conclude; in all the prayers we offer to God for any bleſſing or good thing in behalf of ourſelves or others, it is thereby implied that we promiſe God to contribute all that we can towards their being effected; and therefore, if we do not perform what we ſo promiſe, our prayer is no better than that of a hypocrite; whereas, if we do, we may reſt aſſured, that God will not ſuffer us to be tempted above that we are

able

able to bear, but that, with the Temptation, he will alſo make a way for us to eſcape.

Now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON X.

MATTHEW vi. 13th.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

HAVING finiſhed what I intended on the former part of the Lord's Prayer, I am now to diſcourſe on the Concluſion, which contains firſt, a doxology, or ſolemn giving glory to God, thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory for ever; and ſecondly, an expreſſion of our full approbation of, and hearty conſent to the whole prayer, in the word, Amen. I ſhall therefore explain the meaning of theſe words, and ſhew what ſenſe we ought to have in our minds, when we expreſs them; and

then

then obſerve what duties we may learn, and are inſtructed in, by the uſe thereof.

Theſe words may be underſtood as a recognition and acknowledgment of the greatneſs and majeſty of God, and may be thus paraphraſed. We heartily acknowledge thy ſupreme dominion over us, and the whole world; we adore and worſhip thee as the great King, the Sovereign Lord of all. We alſo humbly admire and praiſe that infinite power, whereby thou governeſt the world, and ordereſt all the affairs of it according to thine own pleaſure; and we give thee the glory of thy Greatneſs and Power, for all the good thou doſt to any, eſpecially for what thou beſtoweſt on us: and laſtly, we hereby acknowledge that God is unchangeable, that he ever was, and will be, as great, powerful, and glorious

as he now is, being infinitely and eternally the ſame, yeſterday, to-day and for ever.

We may alſo underſtand theſe words as aſſigning ſome reaſons inducing us to aſk, and God to grant us our ſeveral requeſts; and the connection between theſe words, and the foregoing petition by the word For, ſeems to favour this interpretation. And then the full ſenſe that we ought to have in our minds, when we ſay this Concluſion of the Lord's Prayer, will be thus.

And having now offered up our Petitions for what we want, it is but fit that we ſhould alſo render thee our praiſe and thanks for what we have received. We therefore acknowledge that thou art a great King, whom we ought to worſhip with the loweſt reverence, and that thy Power is infinite

to

to grant what we have requeſted. We confeſs that thy Glory is above all, and humbly deſire that thou mayeſt be glorified in all things. Laſtly we acknowledge, that thy kingdom, power, and glory are for ever, eternal and immutable; and therefore we will at all times put our whole truſt in thee, becauſe thou canſt never fail us.

From this form of praiſe being added by our Lord, to that form of Prayer which he hath taught us to uſe, we may learn, that it is always our duty to join to our prayers for what we want, our praiſes and thankſgivings alſo for the mercies that we have received, with joyful acknowledgments of his majeſty, greatneſs and bounty; that we ſhould pray without ceaſing, and in every thing give thanks, and by prayer and ſupplication with thankſgiving let our requeſts be made known unto God. And in parti-

cular from the firſt clauſe of this doxology, for thine is the kingdom, we are reminded that it is our duty in all things to ſubmit to the will of God, and to reſign ourſelves to his diſpoſal, he having ſovereign dominion over all.

From the ſecond clauſe of it, thine is the power, we ſhould learn that it is our duty, in all ſtraits and difficulties to apply for his grace to help, direct, and ſupport us, and in all our dangers and wants to rely on his Almighty Power, to relieve and deliver us.

From the third clauſe of it, thine is the glory, we are taught to direct all our actions to his Glory, to whom we here acknowledge that all the glory is due. According to the Apoſtle therefore, whether

ye

ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.

Laſtly, from that eternity which we here acknowledge in all the divine attributes and perfections, we are taught to worſhip God continually, to praiſe him evermore, and to give divine honours to none beſides him; becauſe he is God from everlaſting to everlaſting, the only God, and will not give his Glory to another.

As to the word Amen, it ſignifies verily, truly, or the like; a phraſe often uſed by our Saviour at the beginning of his ſpeeches, to engage the attention of his hearers to what he was going to ſay. This being the proper meaning of the word Amen, the deſign of adding it at the concluſion of any diſcourſe, is to affirm what had been before ſaid, thereby declaring our approbation and

conſent thereto. Thus when we repeat the Creed, we ſay Amen; where it ſignifies ſo it is, this is the true Faith, or all this I ſtedfaſtly believe. And in like manner is the word uſed, in the Commination ordered to be read on the firſt day of Lent.

When we ſay Amen at the end of the Creed, or any profeſſion of our belief, it means the ſame as if we repeated over again all that profeſſion of our Faith, which we had before made in ſeveral words and ſentences, and is a freſh declaration of our conſent to ſuch articles of our Belief. But when the word Amen, is joined to the end of a Prayer, as here, it then means to expreſs our wiſh and deſire that what we have requeſted may be granted. Thus when our Lord ſaid, ſurely I come quickly, the Apoſtle immediately adds, Amen, even ſo come Lord Jeſus; that is, may it be as thou haſt

haſt promiſed; and of the like uſe is this word when added at the end of thoſe benedictions, wherewith moſt of the Epiſtles in the New Teſtament are concluded.

If therefore a Prayer is ſaid by one, and Amen added to it, is ſaid by another, as is common in our publick prayers, where the miniſter only ſpeaks, and the people ſay Amen, then it ſignifies their conſent to, and concurrence with the whole prayer uttered by the miniſter; and is the ſame as when in the Litany we beſeech God to hear us; but if Amen is ſaid by the ſame perſon who ſpeaks the Prayer, as when we add it to our private devotions, then Amen is a repetition in one word, of all that has been before ſaid in the Prayer; 'tis a freſh breathing forth of all thoſe pious deſires and affections of the mind, that had been before

before more largely expreſſed. Thus much for the meaning of the word Amen.

And as we are here taught by our Lord himſelf to add this word at the end of our prayers, to teſtify our conſent thereto, it from hence plainly appears, that all publick prayers ought to be expreſſed in ſuch a language and ſtile, as they may all underſtand them; or otherwiſe they cannot ſay Amen, as it means their approving of, and giving a rational conſent thereto. It is therefore highly expedient, nay, abſolutely neceſſary for the edification of the Church, that the publick prayers which are intended for the uſe of all, ſhould be ſuited to the capacities of all, and be as plain, eaſy, and familiar as poſſible, not only carefully avoiding all high flights, rhetorical figures, and flouriſhes, but all ſuch words as are not of very eaſy meaning,

meaning, and common uſe. In a word, the publick Prayers ſhould be like thoſe of our Church; the words common, the ſtile eaſy, the ſentences ſhort, the whole phraſe and compoſure ſuited to the meaneſt capacity; and in general is a great advantage which premeditated Prayers have over ſuch as are conceived extempore, ſince he that makes a prayer for publick uſe, takes time to ſtudy plainneſs and perſpicuity, which he that prays extempore cannot do.

But above all, it is manifeſtly moſt abſurd, that the publick Prayers in which all are to join, ſhould be in an unknown tongue, in a language not underſtood perhaps by one in twenty in the whole congregation. The moſt ridiculous folly of this is ſufficiently expoſed by St. Paul, and among other arguments by this; that no man can rationally ſay Amen to a prayer uttered in

an

an unknown tongue. I will, ſays he, pray with the ſpirit, and with the underſtanding alſo; I will ſing with the ſpirit, and with the underſtanding alſo; elſe when thou ſhalt bleſs with the ſpirit, how ſhall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned ſay Amen, at the giving of thanks, ſeeing he underſtands not what thou ſayeſt; for thou verily who underſtandeſt the language thou ſpeakeſt in, giveſt thanks well, but the other—he who underſtands it not—is not edified. But when we ſay Amen to any prayer we addreſs to God, it is ſuppoſed that we both underſtood and gave attention to what went before, ſince we thereby give our conſent to, and declare our approbation of it. But how can we do that, unleſs we attend to what is ſaid?

By the word Amen therefore, we are inſtructed in another duty, namely, that

when

when we are at Prayer, to keep our mind to our buſineſs, diligently to attend to what we are about, to avoid if poſſible all wandering thoughts, to be truly affected with every part of that prayer, we either ſpeak ourſelves, or hear pronounced by the miniſter in our names; and to have ſuch thoughts and deſires in our minds throughout the whole office, as the words we then ſpeak do import and ſignify. For unleſs we thus attend to what we ſay, our ſervice will be only lip-worſhip, neither acceptable to God, nor profitable to ourſelves. But if in our minds we give ſuch conſent to every petition we offer up, as is fit and proper for us to give, then the word Amen at the end of all, uttered with fervency and devotion, will fully comprehend the whole prayer; and we ſhall repeat in one devout breath, as much as we prayed for in the whole office.

Having

Having thus gone through every part of the Lord's Prayer, I ſhall make but one general obſervation, that the whole is ſo framed and contrived, as to ſerve both for an expreſſion of our devotion to God, and an inſtruction to ourſelves; that the ſame words which teach us what to requeſt of God, alſo inſtruct us in our duty, and excite us to the performance of it; ſo that its frequent uſe muſt be of ſingular benefit and advantage to us. But then it is a certain truth, that as no wicked man, who continues in his wickedneſs, can ſay this prayer with good attention and ſerious devotion, ſo every good perſon who doth ſay it in that manner, muſt needs by natural efficacy, as well as by the divine grace and bleſſing, be rendered much better by the uſe thereof. For a wicked man continuing ſuch, cannot have thoſe inward affections of mind towards God, that the words of

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this prayer do expreſs, nor yet any hearty deſire to obtain what he requeſts of God, becauſe ſuch devout affections and holy deſires are directly contrary to, and inconſiſtent with the love and practice of Sin. For how can he preſume to call upon God in prayer, who in works denies him? How can he with holy devotion call God his Father, who hath ſold himſelf to the Devil to work wickedneſs, and continually exerciſes himſelf therein? For whoſoever is born of God ſinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himſelf pure, and that wicked one toucheth him not. How can he ſay to God with true devotion, hallowed be thy name, who diſhonours him in his whole life? how can he be ſerious in deſiring the holy name of God may be ſanctified by all, who is himſelf continually profaning and blaſpheming it by wicked oaths and horrid imprecations? how can

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he pray heartily that the kingdom of God may be eſtabliſhed in the world, who will not himſelf be ruled and govered by him? muſt not his heart give his tongue the lye, while he ſays with his mouth, thy kingdom come, but in his heart ſays unto God, depart from us, what is the Almighty that we ſhould ſerve him, and what profit ſhould we have if we pray unto him? how can a man ſay with true and fervent devotion, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven, who continually oppoſes and reſiſts the divine will, who neither ſubmits to the providence of God, nor obeys his precepts, but is abominable and diſobedient, and to every good work reprobate? Indeed in the petition, give us this day our daily bread, there is nothing as to the matter but what a wicked man may agree to, for he may and often doth more earneſtly deſire the things of this life than the good man. But then

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as to the manner of deſiring them, he can no more utter this petition with true devotion, than any of the former; becauſe he doth not depend on God, nor expect thoſe things from his bleſſing, but from his own induſtry and cunning; for if he regarded them as divine bleſſings, he would not acquire them by fraud and injuſtice, extortion and oppreſſion. Nor can the wicked man with true devotion ſay, forgive us our treſpaſſes, for though pardon of ſins is what he wants, and ought earneſtly to wiſh God would grant, yet it is abſurd to imagine, he would offer up any petition to God, the matter of which he himſelf knows is highly unreaſonable; and what can be more unreaſonable or unfit for God to grant, or more profane and preſuming in any to aſk, than that he would pardon an unrepenting ſinner. To aſk this of God is the ſame as to deſire him to abrogate all his holy laws, and to grant

us a licenſe to tranſgreſs them. As little can a wicked man ſincerely pray, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for as every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own luſt, this is what the wicked man chuſes, he gives himſelf up to his own heart's luſts, and delights to follow his wicked imaginations, ſo that to pray againſt temptation, is to pray againſt himſelf, and therefore he cannot be hearty in this petition, unleſs we ſuppoſe what is impoſſible; that a man ſhould at the ſame time love and hate, chuſe and refuſe the ſame things. Laſtly, when ſuch an one ſays, for thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory for ever, which is both an acknowledgement of the infinite and adorable perfections of God, and giving him the praiſe and glory due unto him, how can it be ſuppoſed his heart ſhould go along with his words, when at

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the ſame time it appears by the whole courſe and tenor of his wicked life, that he neither owns the ſovereign dominion of God, dreads his power, nor ſeeks his glory.

Thus it is very evident that a wicked man continuing ſuch, cannot ſay this prayer or any one petition in it, with good attention and fervent devotion; nor can he have ſuch inward affections of mind towards God, as the words expreſs, nor any hearty deſire to obtain thoſe things which he ſeems to requeſt of God; for if he had, he would ſoon become a better man. Whereas every good man by uſing this prayer, muſt naturally be rendered better. Since when he calls on God as his Father, he is reminded of that filial love and duty which he owes him; when he prays that God's name may be hallowed, his own mind muſt then alſo

be filled with an awful reverence towards him; when he ſays thy kingdom come, he is at the ſame time admoniſhed to ſeek firſt the kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs; when he ſays thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven, he is then taught his own duty humbly to reſign himſelf to God's pleaſure, and with all readineſs and chearfulneſs to obey his commands. When he prays for his daily bread, he exerciſes an act of truſt in God's providence, and is cautioned not to uſe any means to procure the good things of this life, but what he hath reaſon to expect for God's bleſſing upon. When he begs of God forgiveneſs of his ſins, this petition muſt be grounded on the teſtimony of his own conſcience, that he is truly penitent, and doth actually exerciſe ſuch mercy and charity towards thoſe who have offended him, as God hath made the condition of his being pardoned. When he

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deſires of God not to be led into temptation, if his requeſt is ſincere, he will carefully avoid thoſe dangers, which he earneſtly prays to be delivered from. Laſtly, when he gives glory to God, by a ſolemn acknowledgement of the divine perfections, ſaying thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever, if he is really affected with what he expreſſes, every time he devoutly repeats theſe words, his love to God will be increaſed, his faith ſtrengthened, and his obedience confirmed.

To conclude; ſuch being the excellency of this Prayer, ſuch the advantages of our ſincerely repeating it, what remains, but that, as the bleſſed Jeſus, in compaſſion to our infirmities, hath taught us how to pray, ſo ſhould we moſt earneſtly implore his holy Spirit to aſſiſt us in Prayer, that by always pronouncing theſe words with attention

attention and fervent devotion, we may thereby obtain his gracious promiſe, that whatſoever we aſk the Father in his name, he will give us, that the Father may be glorified in his ſon.

Now to God the Father, &c.

FINIS.

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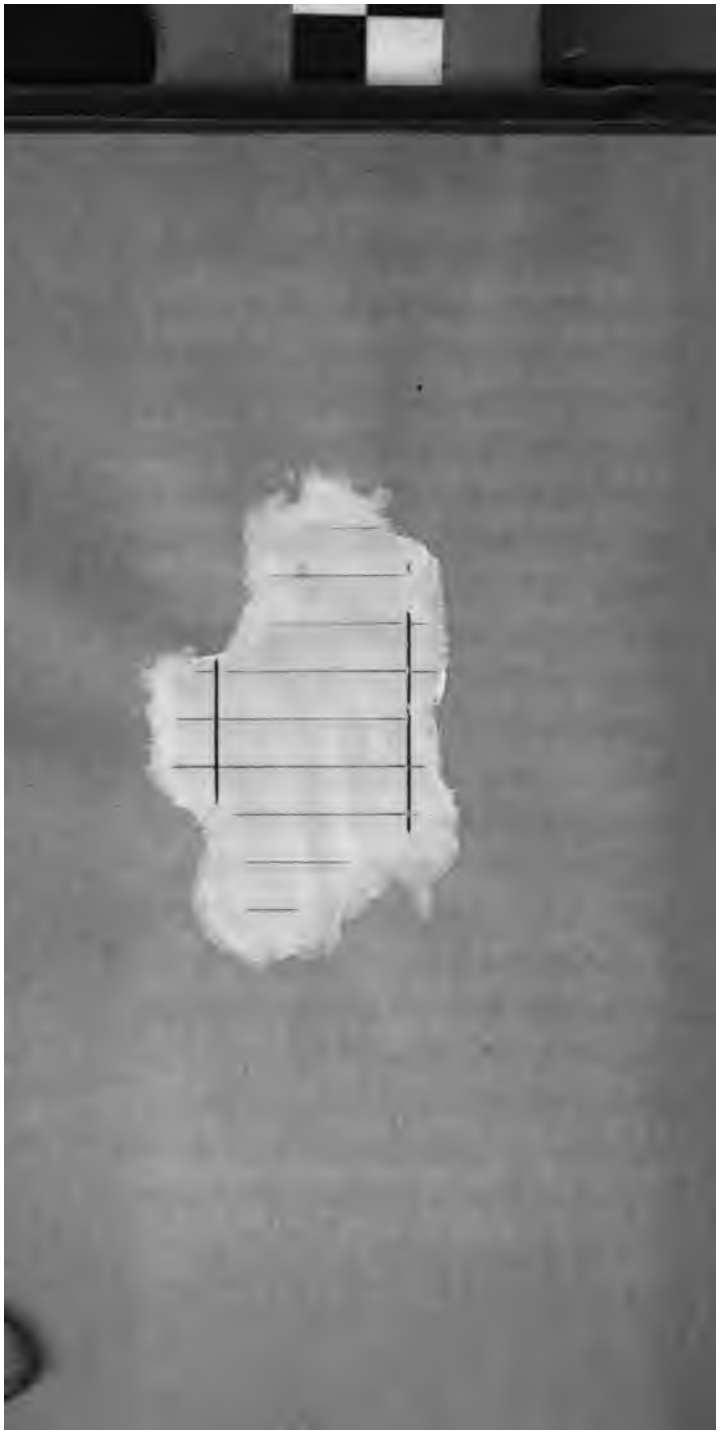
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